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MARCH 11 - MARCH 17 / 1993

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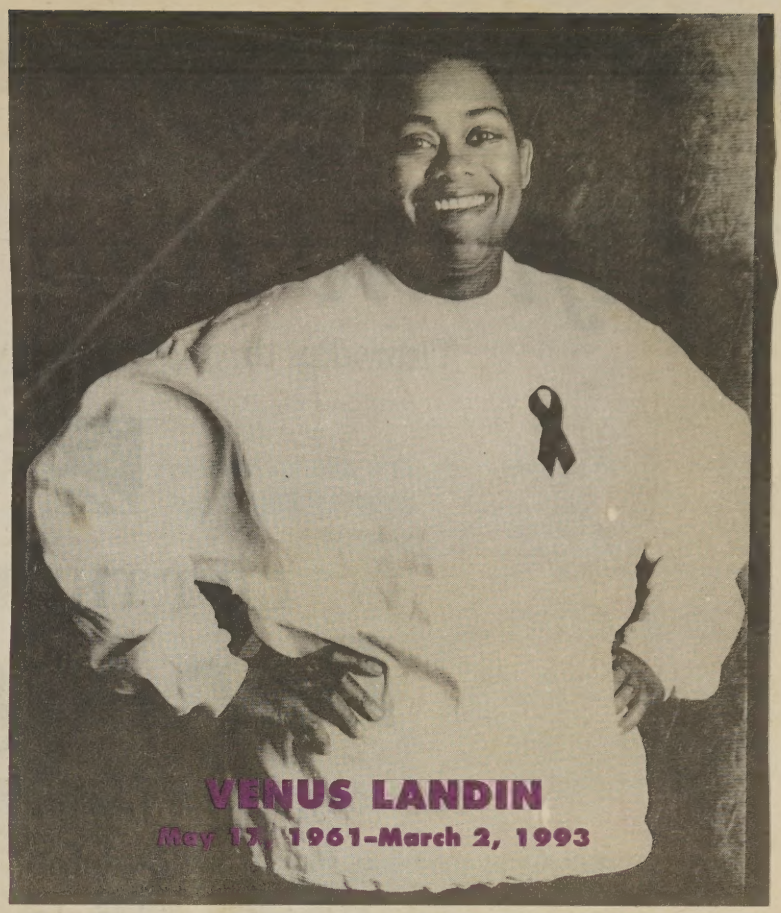

ANNEMARIE POYO

Murder-suicide stuns community

Atlanta—The murder-suicide of two Atlanta lesbians has sent waves of grief and anger throughout the community here, aggravated by inaccurate and sensational mainstream media accounts of the circumstances.

Venus Landin, co-chair of the African American Lesbian and Gay Alliance (AALGA) and a well-known community activist and leader, was shot three times at around 9:40 pm on March 2 by Bisa Niambi, her former lover, who then turned the gun on herself. Landin had come to Niambi's apartment, friends say, because Niambi had promised her money in reparation for property damage caused by Niambi during one of several conflicts during the couple's break-up in February.

Landin and Niambi met last August when Landin was hired by Sevananda Natural Foods Coop, where Niambi was employed. The women began dating in late November, and moved in together shortly afterward. Friends say the relationship was fraught with conflict, brought to a head on February 8, when Niambi burned several items belonging to Landin, smashed a television and VCR, and slashed a couch and articles of Landin's clothing. Niambi was charged with crimi-

CONTINUES ON PAGE 16

Turtle's dumps gay publications

Atlanta—Southern Voice and Etcetera have been removed from the five Turtle's Music and Video stores in the metro Atlanta area that carried the lesbian/gay publications. Those locations include Buford Highway, Rhythm and Views on Peachtree Rd., Town Center Mall in Kennesaw, Ponce de Leon at the Plaza, and Clear Creek Center across from Ansley Mall.

Kimberly Garwood, the Community Relations Manager of Super Club Music (which owns the Atlanta area Turtle's stores) told Southern Voice General Manager Leigh VanderEls on March 4 that Southern Voice and Etcetera were the only two publications being removed. She said there had been a customer complaint about the publications several weeks earlier and that the decision to remove the papers came from the upper management of Super Club Music, which she characterized as "very conservative." Garwood added that she guessed the decision had to do with "family values."

Several hours after she and VanderEls spoke, Garwood called Southern Voice and said that the information she had provided earlier was in error. She said that she had since spoken to Daryl Baldwin, President of Super Club Music, who said that all publications except Creative Loafing and Tafrija, an arts and entertainment magazine, had been ordered removed from the stores. Baldwin also told her that the issue was the "need to clean up the fronts of the stores," and added that removal of the gay/lesbian publications had "nothing to do with their content."

Several store managers confirmed that they had received a fax and an E-Mail message from Joe Martin, Vice President of Advertising for Super Club, telling them to remove all publications except CL and Tafrija. But two store managers said that they had been told they could also keep Highpoint, a bi-weekly intown paper. And at least one store also still has The University Reporter.

Susan Rosko, former manager of the Town Center Turtle's, called Southern Voice several weeks ago and mentioned the customer incident that Garwood described to VanderEls. She said that a very angry woman had come into her store and complained about the content of a gay/lesbian publication. Rosko said she referred the woman to Garwood.

Since the message to remove the publications came from Martin, Turtle's employees have declined to discuss the matter and referred questions to Garwood.

Turtle's has advertised extensively with Etcetera and to a lesser extent with Southern Voice. The Turtle's employee who handles that advertising has not returned calls from either publication.

Martin and Baldwin were out of town until after deadline for this issue and thus not available for comment. VanderEls said that she would speak with both men when they return and attempt to get the publications returned to the stores.

Super Club's customer service number is 988-9805, ext. 173.

GARY KAUPMAN

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Thursday through Sunday, March 25-28

LIFT THE BAN
Bar Nights

Thursday, March 25 and Friday, March 26

Participating Bars Include:

★ Blake's—Friday, March 26

WATCH FOR FURTHER DETAILS

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This rally is being sponsored in coalition with twenty other straight, lesbian and gay organizations.

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AJC tells GLAAD it will accept same-sex wedding announcements

Atlanta—Sue Anne Gresham and Laine Peek were wed on Valentine's Day but the two women may have even more good news to celebrate. Following a March 4 meeting between members of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation/Atlanta (GLAAD) and the editor of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, the couple will be able to celebrate in a big way. The newspaper has promised to drop its requirement that only announcements of legal marriages may be printed.

Laine, 28, and Sue Anne, 27, celebrated their commitment to each other in a ceremony and reception at the Atlanta Botanical Garden February 14. The couple, taking the name Morgan, sent in their announcement to be printed in the Sunday edition of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution without referring to Laine's gender.

Laine and Sue Anne Morgan's wedding announcement in the AJC may have led to the newspaper dropping its policy to only run announcements of "legal" marriages.

"We sent it in to get our wedding announced. We just wanted to see if we could get it printed," said Laine Morgan.

On February 21 the wedding announcement was printed, but it was edited to describe Laine as "he" and "son of." When the pair contacted the newspaper to have the mistake corrected, they were told that the paper did not run announcements of "illegal marriages."

Sue Anne and Laine proceeded to contact Ron Martin, Editor of the Journal-Constitution along with other media and lesbian and gay activist groups. Their pursuit of the issue led to last week's meeting between Ron Martin and the co-chairs of GLAAD, Michelle Martin and Carl Lange.

During the Thursday meeting, GLAAD representatives presented several reasons to Ron Martin why the Morgan's wedding announcement and others like it should be printed by the Atlanta paper. These points included the fact that the paper's readership includes a large number of lesbians and gay men, the Journal-Constitution currently recognizes same-sex partners in its obituaries, and that several papers around the country print same-sex wedding announcements, including the Austin American Statesman. Both the Journal-Constitution and the Statesman are owned by the Cox family.

According to the GLAAD members, the meeting was very productive. Michelle Martin announced that Ron Martin agreed to include same-sex unions in their wedding announcements. She viewed the change in the paper's policy as a big step for the lesbian and gay community. "We're letting the entire community of Atlanta know that we have relationships and those relationships ought to be respected," said Martin.

The proposed change does not come without some concern about a possible backlash from religious conservatives. Following the meeting, Ron Martin was reluctant to discuss the change in the paper's policy. When asked if same sex commitment announcements would be printed he replied, "We explored the question with some folks. I think it would be better if we remained low-key with whatever we do."

"The attitude of the paper is to make this a simple transition without drawing attention to it," said Carl Lange. He adds that he is comfortable with the relationship his organization has established with the Journal-Constitution and feels the editorial staff has been very responsive to concerns raised by the lesbian and gay community in Atlanta.

When asked to explain their decision to get married and their resolve to have the announcement printed in the Journal-Constitution, Laine Morgan states simply that they wanted to celebrate the beginning of their relationship.

"Members of our community suffer so many losses because we are gay. Sue Anne and I decided we were going to reclaim some of the things we were told we couldn't have."

Man with AIDS loses fight with Storehouse over insurance cap

Atlanta—A man who sued Storehouse Inc. for changing its insurance plan to cap his benefits lost his case in a ruling he didn't live long enough to hear.

On February 25, the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a U.S. District Court ruling against Richard Owens, who died of AIDS after suing metro Atlanta-based Storehouse.

In November 1988, Owens became the fifth Storehouse employee diagnosed with AIDS. Storehouse's insurer notified the company that it planned to cancel Storehouse's group policy because of the high cost of these patients.

The policy provided lifetime benefits of up to $1 million for each employee.

Storehouse changed insurers, finding one that capped all AIDS-related claims at $25,000. The policy also provided that the company could amend the plan at any time.

Despite the cap, Storehouse paid $116,324 for Owens' AIDS-related claims before notifying him that because he was costing so much it would begin strictly enforcing the policy, court documents show.

CONTINUES TOP, NEXT COLUMN

Owens sued, claiming that changing policy violated the federal Employee Retirement Income Security Act.

But the 11th Circuit ruled ERISA doesn't prevent a company from changing its benefit policies and noted that Storehouse's new policy specifically included a provision allowing it flexibility.

And it said that capping benefits for a certain disease is not discriminatory. Federal law "does not prohibit an employer from crafting its medical plan to meet economic imperatives," the court ruled.

Chip Rowan, attorney for AIDS Legal Project of Atlanta, said he was not surprised at the ruling. Rowan said that future cases of this kind, however, will be pursued under the Americans With Disabilities Act, giving employees a better chance of relief. Rowan added, "The ruling is bad news for all workers, not just those with AIDS, since it allows companies to cut them out of the insurance plan if they become ill for any reason."

Mother Teresa will open AIDS hospice in Atlanta

Atlanta—Mother Teresa hopes to open a hospice in Atlanta, primarily for people with AIDS. Four sisters of her Missionaries of Charity—two from India, one from Chile and one from the United States—are living in Atlanta and have started meeting clients at Grady Memorial Hospital's Infectious Disease Clinic who may need their care.

Grady officials said that the sisters, with help of the Roman Catholic Archidiocese of Atlanta, are searching for a building for the proposed hospice. The sisters, however, have declined requests for interviews about their project.

Dr. Sharne Sheehey, a doctor at the IDC, got the ball rolling for the hospice by sending a letter a year ago to Mother Teresa in Calcutta, India, where the Nobel Peace Prize winner is based.

"It sounds stupid, but that's what I did, thinking she'd just laugh at me," the doctor said.

Sheehey, who has worked with the needy on four continents, said she sent the letter in desperation.

"There's really very little difference between working here and working in India, West Africa, South America and other places I've been," she said.

Mother Teresa was contacted by Dr. Sharne Sheehey of Grady Memorial Hospital to open a hospice in Atlanta.

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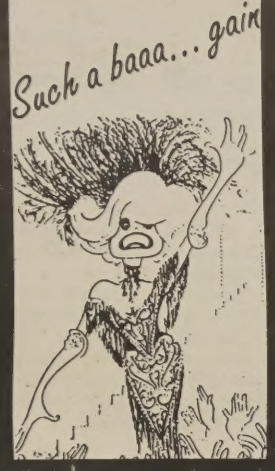

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FL group runs gay-positive ads in local papers

Gainesville, FL—A non-profit organization dedicated to changing negative attitudes about lesbians and gay men through mass media has begun running gay-positive ads in local newspapers in this university town.

Sons & Daughters of America placed its first ad in the University of Florida's daily, The Independent Florida Alligator, on Feb. 25, and response, according to SDA director Wayne Besen, has been "excellent."

"We've had people talk to us and tell us they appreciated it, and we've had a boost in donations," he said, adding that the only negative response so far has been a single letter to the editor from a fundamentalist. "It's a very positive ad. I don't think it left much room to be completely angry."

Plans are already in place for SDA's ads be placed in the Gainesville Sun within the next two weeks.

SDA was formed four months ago, according to Besen, who is a telecommunications student at the University of Florida.

"I strongly feel we need to reach out to the majority population and education them," he said. "There's not much we can do about the religious right, but the majority of people are reachable."

Besen said that he envisions SDA as a national center for promoting positive images of gay men and lesbians.

Tony is Gay
"The fact that I am not gay has not stopped me from being friends with T
ing friends with him has only shown me how inaccurate people's percept
s and lesbians are. For me the choice was easy. Tony will always be my
Sons & Daughte

"What we want to do goes beyond this," he said. "The eventual dream is to have a production center that continually puts out positive information about gays and lesbians."

To do that, says Besen, the group hopes to sprout local chapters across the country. For more information on SDA, write Sons & Daughters of America, PO Box 12922, Gainesville, FL 32604-0922.

FL Republicans want to keep ban on gay adoptions

Tallahassee, FL—A legislative hearing on a bill to legalize gay adoptions became a forum for an emotional debate on homosexuality and family values.

No vote is planned this session on the issue of repealing a state law banning gay adoptions, but Art Simon, D-Miami, allowed a one-hour debate Friday before his House Aging and Human Services Committee.

"This is not an issue of gay and lesbian rights," said Rep. Suzanne Jacobs, D-Delray Beach, who has proposed dropping the ban. "This is truly an issue of child advocacy."

Others disagree, including three Republicans who spoke against repeal.

"The question is whether small children without the ability to make a reasoned choice or not should be subject to adoption by an extremely non-traditional living unit," said state Rep. Tom Feeney, R-Orlando. "I think it will take us in the wrong direction."

Rep. Carl Littlefield, R-Dade City, said he opposes "mainstreaming a lifestyle that many people across the state of Florida are still very uncomfortable with."

Carole Griffin of the American Family Association charged, "The homosexual lifestyle is a major threat to the emotional and physical health of a child."

But Barbara Ghezzi, representing Queer Nation, said worries about turning adopted children gay are false.

"It astounds me that one who preaches family values can also spread fear, intolerance and hatred at the same time," she said.

Florida and New Hampshire are the only states which by law prohibit adoptions by lesbians and gay men.

A Monroe County judge struck down the law as unconstitutional, but the state Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services declined to appeal. That decision does not open the door for a legal test case that could affect the rest of the state.

But proponents of gay adoptions are pressing cases in Broward and Hillsborough counties, which guarantees either courts or the Legislature will have to address the issue.

SC attempts to ban gays from National Guard

Columbia, SC—Support for legislation introduced Feb 25 that would ban lesbians and gay men from the National Guard could put federal funding for South Carolina's troops in jeopardy, experts say.

State Rep. Lindsey Graham, R-Seneca, introduced the legislation in response to President Clinton's decision to lift the ban on gays in the military.

Graham, a former Air Force lawyer and part-time Air National Guard member, contends the South Carolina Guard, with about 15,000 troops, is a state militia that makes it possible to enact a state law banning gays.

"The recruitment and organization of a state militia is a uniquely state function," Graham said.

But Eldon D. Wedlock, a University of South Carolina professor who specializes in constitutional law, said that since World War II the National Guard has become integrated into the active-duty military.

If the federal government drops its ban on gays, Wedlock said, "It's the U.S. military regulations that would govern all situations. ... It's a slam-dunk."

Most of the jobs in South Carolina's National Guard are federally funded. The state provides about $5 million for the Guard and the federal government almost $147 million.

Virginia, Alabama and Indiana have considered laws banning gays from the National Guard, but none has passed one so far.

COMING EVENTS

Greenville, SC—Voters United for Equality (VUE) of Greenville will present a showing of "Desire," a British documentary about the flowering of gay and lesbian culture in early 20th century German and its subsequent destruction by the Nazis. The film will be shown Sunday afternoon, March 14 from 2:30-4:30 pm in the auditorium of the Greenville County Library, Main Branch, at the corner of College and Academy Streets in Greenville.
For more information, call (803) 843-1070 or 235-5019.

Wall Street Journal Bans Discrimination Against Gays:

Acting in response to requests from the union and staff members, the Wall Street Journal has banned discrimination based on sexual orientation. Publisher Peter R. Kann issued a statement banning such discrimination this month. According to the Washington Blade, Kann wrote in the Journal's employee newsletter that he initially thought there was no need for including sexual orientation in the company's anti-discrimination statement. "All of us must treat each other with respect, courtesy, and consideration," he wrote.

West Virginians Speak Out On Gay Rights: A public hearing on civil rights was the forum for a debate last week on whether West Virginia should protect gays and lesbians from discrimination. The West Virginia coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights, the West Virginia Civil Liberties Union and the attorney general's office spoke in support of adding protection for sexual orientation under the state's Human Rights Act, Fair Housing Act and The Crimes Act. But members of the American Family Association, West Virginians for Decency and Morality and other related groups filled most seats in the House of Delegates chamber and its galleries during the hearing Feb. 25. "We believe anything morally wrong is also politically wrong," said Gary Trout of WVDM.

Court Rejects Family Benefits Claim By Gay Couple: The Canadian Supreme Court rejected a family benefits claim by a gay couple last week, saying gay and lesbian pairs aren't considered families under the nation's human rights statute. The court's majority said Parliament never intended to include gay couples in 1983 when it changed human rights law to prevent employers from discrimination against people based on family status. But Chief Justice Antonio Lamer said that future challenges may seek the court to address questions of whether to amend the Human Rights Act.

Children's Code Vote Delayed By Question of Adoptions By Gays: The New Mexico House delayed a vote on a new state Children's code after questions arose as to whether gay couples could adopt children under proposed new language. Rep. Darla Witney-Welles said last week that she was prepared to challenge language that would allow adoptions "by two adult unmarried individuals who have resided together for two years." "I don't think they had the idea that unmarried couples of the same sex could adopt," she said. "That caused a lot of us some serious concern." She added that an amendment on the House floor could take care of the issue.

AP PHOTO

Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori has fired 117 diplomats, 15 who came out as being gay. Fujimori said he fired the men for "flaunting their homosexuality."

Peruvian President Purges Gays: According to a UPI report cited in the Washington Blade, Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori has fired a group of diplomats for "flaunting" their homosexuality. "I have nothing against the personal, private conduct of these people, but if it is the case of a person displaying ...his homosexuality in a scandalous manner, it is not honorable for this gentleman to represent his country," Fujimori reportedly said. Following a "purge" of 117 diplomats by the president, 15 of those fired came out as gay. "Fujimori has opened up the door for gays to be eliminated from society," said Lucrecia Bermudez, a Peruvian gay activist who lives in San Francisco. "He has given the public justification for it."

College Newspapers Disappear After Outing Gay Student: More than 3000 copies of the Eastern Washington Univ. campus newspaper disappeared from news racks after a dispute between The Easterner and the campus Gay-Lesbian Alliance. The thefts occurred after Jay Elbrecht, co-chair of GLA, complained about reporter Anna Almeda's using the name of a gay student in an article about alliance members trying to attend the upcoming National March on Washington. Almeda said that the student in question approved the article, but the GLA disputed that claim. Almeda also said that two of three students seen taking the papers were Alliance members, but Elbrecht denied any knowledge of the theft.

Bank Of America Loses College Deposits Over Boy Scout Funding: The San Jose-Evergreen Community College District is closing accounts worth up to $2 million at the Bank of America because the bank continues to fund the Boy Scouts of America despite a ban on gays. District trustees voted unanimously to close the accounts, said trustee Ken Yeager, who is Santa Clara County's first elected gay official. "It was important that the district send a message to the public that we do not support discrimination of any kind," Yeager said. Everett Valley College student body leaders closed a Bank of America account worth more than $60,000 two weeks ago, and the San Francisco Unified School District voted Feb. 9 to close two accounts worth $5 million in annual deposits.

Lesbian Sues, Alleges Discrimination: A New Mexico state employee alleges her boss discriminated against her after she identified herself as a lesbian in 1990. Joan Benvenuti of Albuquerque filed a lawsuit in state district court, last week, alleging discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Benvenuti alleges Terry Brigance, director of the state Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, reduced her salary by about 10 percent without a hearing, contending her job had been reclassified. Heterosexual employees whose jobs were reclassified "not only did not have their salaries lowered, but in fact received raises," the lawsuit alleges.

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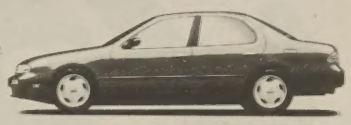

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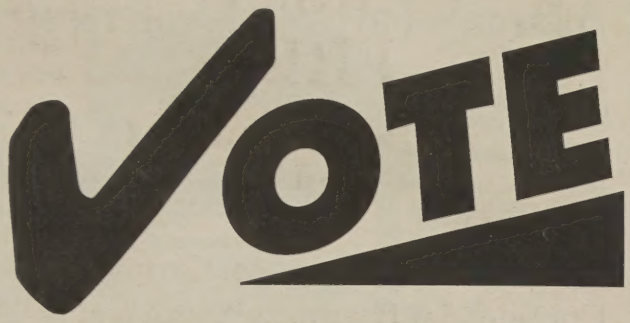

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APRIL 17 ZOO ATLANTA

Women and cancer update

A new study contradicts the notion that body shape affects a woman's risk for breast cancer.

Instead of worrying over pear- or apple-shaped bodies, women should focus more on controlling their amount of body fat, researchers from Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center report in the current issue of Annals of Internal Medicine.

This is the first major study to dispute a possible link between weight distribution and breast cancer.

"This study proves pretty conclusively that [body shape] isn't a real risk," said Dr. Elin Sigurdson of the Fox Chase Cancer Center. Gauging a woman's risk by body shape is "highly simplistic and far too crude to put any reliance on it."

An author of an earlier report disputed the new conclusions, claiming that the number of patients studied was too small to see the link between weight distribution and breast cancer.

"One has to be extremely careful about how to interpret" the latest findings, said Dr. David Schapira of the University of South Florida. "I hardly think it refutes" the connection.

Mammography no help to younger women

Mammography screening for breast cancer offers no long-term survival benefit for women in their 40s, but the test does save lives among women age 50 and older, according to a study that analyzed research in the United States, Canada and Europe.

"This review has demonstrated that there is no clear benefit seen for screening in younger women, providing a strong argument that screening should not be offered to such women," said a study published Thursday in the Online Journal of Current Clinical Trials.

The study's conclusion by J. M. Elwood, B. Cox and A.K. Richardson of the Otago Medical School in Dunedin, New Zealand is based on an analysis of six studies published in medical journals.

Each of the six studies analyzed followed the health experience of thousands of women over a number of years and compared the survival rates of those who received mammograms and those who did not.

The authors said that the primary purpose for breast cancer screening is to reduce deaths from the disease and that the six large studies show that young women who undergo the tests have about the same rate of death as young women who are not screened.

"There is clearly no evidence of benefit [among younger women], with the breast cancer mortality rates in screened and unscreened groups being very similar," the study said.

In contrast, the study said that there was strong evidence that mammography screening of women around the age of 50 does lead to fewer breast cancer deaths in this age group.

In light of the published reports, the Alliance for Aging Research released a statement reemphasizing its recommendation that women aged 50 and over receive annual mammographies.

Women becoming more prone to lung cancer

The lung-cancer death rate among Wisconsin women has more than tripled in 20 years, largely because more are smoking, state health officials say.

State medical officer Patrick L. Remington and epidemiologist Nancy Chudy said that the death rate from lung cancer was 26.3 per 100,000 in 1990 compared with 8.3 in 1970.

During the period, breast cancer deaths dipped only from 29.3 per 100,000 women to 28.9, and all cancer deaths among women increased from 137 per 100,000 to 141.

"The lack of progress in reducing cancer mortality among women can be explained entirely by the preventable epidemic of lung cancer," Remington and Ms. Chudy wrote in an article being published in this month's Wisconsin /Medical Journal.

PAUL RECER and A.J. HOSTETLER

Dose size no difference in ddI effectiveness, study shows

Washington, DC—Low, medium and high doses of the drug didanosine (ddI) had simliar effects overall on the progression of advanced HIV disease in persons unable to take zidovudine (AZT) because of blood-related side effects, according to a study sponsored by the national Instuitute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and Bristol-Myers Squibb Company.

The trial enrolled patients with advanced HIV disease who were unable to continue AZT because of significant drops in the number of certain white and red blood cells. While participants taking three different doses of ddI showed no significant differences in survivial or in the rate of development of AIDS related opportunisitic infections, those assigned to the two higher doses of ddI experienced a greater rise in hemoglobin, white blood cell counts and CD4- T cells than did those on the low doses.

"Based on this analysis, it is not possible to reach a definite conclusion on whether increases in CD4- T cell counts imply the effectiveness of a particular dose of ddI or merely indicate which patients are healthier to begin with, or both," said principal investigator Dr. J. Davis Allan, Jr., an infectious disease specialist at the New England Deaconess Hospital in Boston and assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School.

Patients taking the highest dose of ddI, 750 mg per day, were more likely than those on the lower dose to suffer from peripheral neuropathy, numbness, tingling and pain in the extremeties, and pancratities. Researchers said that the only clear recommendation they could make from those results was to avoid the 750/mg/day dose in most HIV patients with advanced disease.

Bernadine Healy resigns as head of NIH

Bethesda, MD—Dr. Bernadine P. Healy has announced her resignation as director of the National Institutes of Health, but the Clinton administration has decided to keep David Kessler as Food and Drug Administration commissioner.

The two had been among the most prominent holdovers from the Bush administration.

Healy said she will step down June 30 to return to the Cleveland Clinic Foundation. She said she had not met with President Clinton, but in discussions with Health and Human Services Secretary "it was made clear that it would be best for the President to choose his own NIH director."

White House spokesman George Stephanopoulos said Healy had "served her country well." He said the administration would be "moving immediately to...work with the scientific community and pick the best replacement for Dr. Healy."

While at NIH, Healy made research into women's health problems a priority, but she angered some Democrats by supporting the Bush policy opposing federal funded fetal tissue research, which was immediately overturned when Clinton took office last month.

She said it was unfortunate that NIH had been caught up in the abortion debate.

"The fetal tissue issue dogged NIH the whole way," she said. "NIH has become a bit of the Beirut of abortion and of fetal tissue."

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STOSH OSTROW, M.D.
General Practice

China's First AIDS Hotline Faces Uphill Battle

Beijing—Wan Yanhai answered the AIDS hotline, and spoke to a nervous 23-year-old woman calling from the far-off island province of Hainan. Her question: "Can AIDS be transmitted through saliva?"

"It's impossible," Wan quickly replied, telling her not to worry about contracting the fatal disease through kissing.

Wan methodically explained the transmission and prevention of AIDS—which Western health experts also say is unlikely to be spread by saliva. The caller grew embarrassed when he explained the use of condoms and suspicious when he asked about her sex life.

"What's your organization?" she asked. "What are you up to?"

That recent call to China's first AIDS hotline, set up last April, shows the uphill struggle this country of 1 billion faces as it tries to prevent AIDS from making major inroads.

The number of known cases of AIDS infection in China has gone from four in 1988 to nearly 1,000 now. About three-fourths of the victims are drug abusers, health officials say, but they are nervous about the virus spreading through sexual contact, particularly as growing numbers of Chinese come into contact with foreigners and as prostitution—once suppressed—makes a comeback.

Traditional prudery has made it difficult to disseminate information on sexual transmission of the disease, and many people are loath to ask questions because extramarital affairs and homosexuality are frowned upon in this police state.

The biggest problem is that China's government has yet to adopt a vigorous health education program to combat the disease, Wan says.

The hotline he runs—open Monday through Friday evenings and part of Saturday—was set up by the China Health Education Research Institute in an effort to break through those barriers by allowing people to get information anonymously.

The number of callers has increased gradually to an average of eight to 10 per day, says Wan. Nine out of 10 callers are men; 15 percent say they are gay.

The hotline consists of single phone in a fifth-floor room at the institute's central Beijing office. It has strict rules of confidentiality, but scared callers still frequently hang up without saying a word.

"Some are concerned we'll tell friends, family or police," Wan says.

He cannot guarantee Big Brother is not listening, but promises to fight if anyone gets in trouble for calling.

Many of the counselors are Beijing Medical University students. They may lack experience, but they have plenty of missionary zeal.

"We're all enthusiastic about this," said Xia Kai, a 24-year-old public health student. He reassured two callers who complained of headaches and cold symptoms; both had already tested negative for the AIDS virus twice.

Although the hotline has hardly made a dent in China's AIDS awareness—just 1,500 inquiries so far—more Chinese newspapers and magazines have been publishing articles on the service with its phone number.

The institute has put thousands of stickers with the hotline's number on Beijing's streets, taxis and in other places where gay men meet surreptitiously. Homosexuality is not illegal, but gays are often arrested on charges of hooliganism.

A new two-year program drafted by Wan for AIDS prevention among gays sets as one goal the reduction of discrimination against gays. The institute will encourage gay men to become involved in AIDS education and will distribute 10,000 packets of condoms each year.

Educating prostitutes about AIDS will be tough, because they are driven underground by anti-vice laws.

Wan warns complacent Chinese: "This is a disease of all humanity, not only foreigners."

DAN BIERS

OBITUARIES

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Images of the last few weeks haunt me as I sit on the front steps and watch the earth come to life. It seems so unfair that as we lose you, we gain a warmer, greener Earth. Winter has taken its toll in such a wicked way for the past few years and Spring is no consolation. I cannot put in words the emptiness and confusion that I feel.

Please forgive me for my indiscretions and any doubts I may have had. Your love for me was perfect and unfailing and mine in return was so imperfect. Even though I hesitated to do all those new and different things you wanted me to do, I always had a good time. You were so brave in fighting this hellish disease and you did it in your own way. The number of friends who loved you is truly amazing and we are all richer for having known you. Thank you for your contributions!

Build a nest for me in Heaven and keep it warm. I'll see you again soon. The doggies and I miss you immensely…Woof!

Your Looney Bird, Steve

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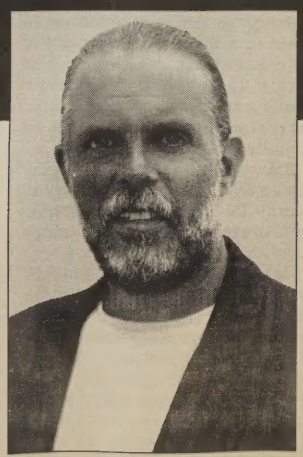

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Judge's ruling will help keep gays out of St. Patrick's Day Parade

New York City—A federal judge blocked the city's attempt to force sponsors of this year's St. Patrick's Day Parade to include a gay group, calling the parade a form of speech protected by the Constitution.

The Ancient Order of Hibernians, a Roman Catholic fraternal organization, had threatened to cancel this year's parade, the nation's oldest and largest, if forced to allow the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization to march.

"A parade is, by its nature, a pristine form of speech," U.S. District Judge Kevin T. Duffy said in his ruling Feb. 26.

He said the Hibernians couldn't be forced to include a group whose beliefs conflicted with its own, and compared the city's Human Rights Commission to the the "thought police" of George Orwell's novel "1984" for ordering the group's inclusion.

The Hibernians had argued that the parade is an expression of religious beliefs protected by the right to free speech. They noted that it is held on Fifth Avenue chiefly because it passes St. Patrick's Cathedral.

The judge prohibited the city from interfering with the Hibernians' right to conduct the parade. The city had revoked the Hibernians' parade permit.

Duffy said his ruling applied only to this year's event. A permanent judgment would be "inappropriate in a case such as this where the facts have seemed to shift as the desert sands in the midst of a wind storm."

The parade, started in 1762, has been staged by the Hibernians for most of the last 153 years.

"Fabulous," said John Dunleavy, acting chairman of the parade. "This means the parade will go on."

Mayor David Dinkins said he was disappointed by the decision but would instruct police to issue a parade permit to the Hibernians.

"However, I urge the parade sponsor to reconsider its exclusionary policy," Dinkins said in a statement from Japan, where he was on a trade mission.

Brendan Fay, a member of the parade committee for the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization, said the group was "very saddened and outraged by this." He said the group would stage some kind of protest on St. Patrick's Day.

"What is legal is not necessarily right or just," Fay said. "We will be present on Fifth Avenue on March 17. That is our right."

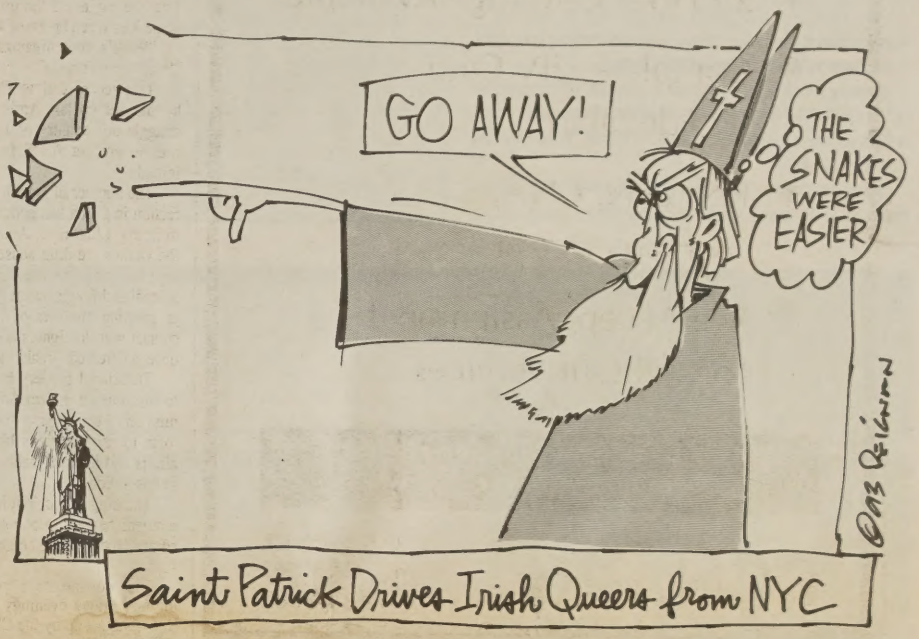
The Hibernians took the issue to court after the city refused to grant them a parade permit.

The dispute began in 1991 when the gay group asked permission to march but was barred by the parade committee. A local Hibernian chapter invited ILGO to march with it, and Mayor David Dinkins gave up his spot at the front of the parade to march with the group. Last year, the gays were banned altogether and staged their own counter-parade the same day, attracting more politicians than the main event by the Hibernians.

This year, the city Human Rights Commission had ruled that barring gays was illegal; the Hibernian national convenition had prohibited local chapters from sponsoring parades; and the city had issued a parade permit to a relatively liberal group that planned to admit the gay delegation.

But the Hibernians formed a separate corporation to run the parade, and the liberal group folded and gave back its parade permit. Cardinal O'Connor blasted the city, and the conservative Family Defense Council announced that if the gay group were allowed to participate in the Irish parade, it would demand to be allowed to march in the city's Gay Pride Parade with signs reading "sodomy is a sin."

LARRY NEUMEISTER
with JOHN SHANAHAN and RICK HAMPSON



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"Beet" plant seeds sent to Republicans as gay-bashing warning

In a move filled with political symbolism, a gay Republican organization has mailed vegetable plant seeds to dozens of the nation's top Republicans as a warning against gay-bashing.

Republicans For Individual Freedom's sent the seeds as a way of emphasizing the need for the Party to return to its historical roots. The Republican Party, they say, was founded in the mid 1850s as a Party that cherished and respected personal freedoms and individual liberties.

The choice of beet seeds was selected to serve as a warning that Republicans who pander to the religious right and engage in gay-bashing will be "beet."

February 28th was chosen as it was the 139th birthday of the GOP. The first meeting of the Republican Party was held at a Congregationalist Church in Ripon, Wisconsin on February 28, 1854.

Recipients of the "beet" seeds also received RIF's trademark political item—a pink campaign-style button with a picture of Abraham Lincoln with the inscription "Not All Republicans Are Straight...Not All Gay Voters Are Democrats."

Party and Congressional leaders who got the mailing include; Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole of Kansas; House Republican Leader Robert Michel of Illinois; Republican National Party Chairman Haley Barbour; Republican state legislative leaders in states where RIF has members (New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Alabama, Texas, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Michigan, Oregon, California). Copies of the letter were also sent to the Human Rights Campaign Fund and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force to assist them in their lobbying of Republicans.

RIF was founded in 1987 and has over 150 members in several chapters nationwide. Interested gay Republicans can obtain membership information by writing; Republicans, Post Office Box 13162, Atlanta, Georgia 30324.

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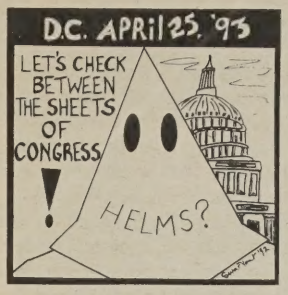

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The opinions expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of Southern Voice.

Submissions should be typed, double-spaced and no longer than two pages. We are happy to offer anonymity when letters are printed, but all submissions must be signed. Please also give us your phone number in case we have questions. We reserve the right to edit for space.

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SOUTHERN VOICE

GUEST EDITORIAL

What do we do now?

by PAUL VARNELL

Whether gays and lesbians will have the right to serve in the U.S. military will be decided one way or the other in the next few months. It will be decided, more or less, by Congress and whether or not the legislators vote to override President Clinton's initiative. How Congress votes—are you following this?—will be influenced to a high degree by how effectively we make our case directly to it and indirectly through its perception of public opinion.

The Washington-based gay and lesbian groups are small and do not have the resources to play political hardball or command much media attention outside of Washington—"outside the beltway," as they say. So it is up to us. But what might we do? Call or write legislators, urge friends to write, support gay organizations, the same stuff you have heard repeatedly? Is there not some new technique to suggest? Some new insight or breakthrough?

Frankly, no. Political advocacy is a lot like sex: there are only a few basic ways of doing it, all of them reasonably well-known. All the rest is costuming, background music and foreplay. But, as with sex, you can learn more about it and get better at it.

So let us reinvent political advocacy here, ignoring the civics books' pieties.

Start with the fact that voting is the only political activity most people engage in. And yet, or rather because of that, it is the most nearly useless thing to do. When 100 million people vote in an election, your impact on the final result is essentially zero. Yet people do it. Polls tell us that gays vote in higher numbers than most people. You yourself probably voted.

Far fewer people call or write their senator or representative to let them know their opinion on an issue. You probably know very few people who have done so. This is odd because the smaller the number of people who participate in a process, the greater the impact of any one person's component. If 100 million vote but only ten million write or call their legislator, that means that a letter or call has ten times the impact of their vote.

Actually, the impact is even greater than that. Miriam Ben-Shalom of the Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Veterans of America says she was told that congressional staffs assume a letter stands for about 100 voters. Who would not vote a hundred times if he could do so easily? It is like being able to live out the old Chicago slogan, "Vote early and vote often."

It ought to follow that people who are strongly concerned about ending the military's gay ban would tell their legislators their views. It is surprising how few people do not draw this perfectly obvious conclusion. "I'm not political," they say. To which one may reply, "Do you know what they call people who are not political? They call them 'losers.'"

If a legislator supports the ban, calls and letters can weaken his resolve and head off flamboyant, homophobic statements. If a legislator is undecided, calls and letters can sway him. Many legislators, I am told, would like to vote with us on this issue: they do not want to think of themselves (or have people think of them) as bigots. But they are fearful about such a vote. They need a substantial number of supportive cards and letters to point to in order to justify their vote.

If a legislator is announced as favoring an end to the ban, letters to them can have enormous value. The point is not just to support their position, but to raise the intensity of their interest and concern on the issue. Just as voting is the least useful thing a citizen can do politically, so it is also for a legislator. The point is to get a legislator to be aggressive on the issue, to speak out, make a public statement, speak on the House or Senate floor, lobby his colleagues.

Throw away your civics book. The real significance of a legislator is not his single vote but how much hard pressure he can put on his colleagues. "If you vote with me on this, I'll do such and so for you," or even, "If you do not vote my way, I'll never let your favorite bill out of my committee."

This has particular relevance for those of us who live in the major gay enclaves. Most of us have liberal, supportive representatives. But what is their real, effective impact? My own representative, Sidney Yates (Chicago-D), though a hyper-liberal with enormous seniority and a high percentage of gay constituents, never does anything on gay issues unless he is pushed, and he never lobbies his colleagues unless he is pushed very hard.

Even better, one might make a personal visit to a senator or representative's district office, thus showing even greater concern on the issue. Most legislators go home on weekends, providing an opportunity to schedule a meeting with them. The March on Washington for Gay Rights, etc. provides a good opportunity for a visit on the legislator's home turf. Both national gay organizations can help set up visits for you to speak with the legislator or (just as effective) a staff member.

One might also call or write President Clinton, says Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), to thank him for his political and moral courage in pressing the issue. And, one might add, to stiffen his resolve. As Margaret Thatcher remarked to George Bush—in a different context—"Now, George, this is no time to go all wobbly!" It was Clinton himself, after all, who said he wanted to get on to economic issues and health care reform, "issues that affect far more people" than ending the gay ban. Clinton needs to be reminded that the ban affects a lot of us because it is a constant reminder of our second-class citizenship, that it certifies us as people who are defective or disruptive and not worthy of participating in all of society's institutions.

Ben-Shalom argues that current military personnel and veterans have much more clout on this issue than civilians. She is surely right. For gay or lesbian veterans, visiting a legislator, writing or making a visible media presence has genuine value because they can make claims based on first-person knowledge and personal experiences, good or bad, that the rest do not have. Veterans, even more than the rest of us, should contact not only their own legislators but also Senators San Nunn (D-Ga.) and Robert Dole (R-Kan.). Dole is a veteran of World War II and was badly wounded, spent four years in military hospitals, and even now has no use of his right hand. He is reachable on this issue at the empathy level.

Richard Tafel of the Log Cabin Clubs agrees that veterans have a potent role to play. He also points out that six Senate Republicans voted to support the Clinton compromise, and that many others do not quite know what to do. Tafel says that when he met with Dole staffer Sheila Burke, she supported his idea of balanced hearings and the idea of gay Republicans testifying. "If I had some gay veterans who could testify, I might just talk for 10 seconds, then turn the microphone over to them," says Tafel.

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ANNIVERSARIES

Happy 6-Month Anniversary to Nigel Crawhall and Richard Penny of Cape Town, South Africa. Nigel works for the National Language Project and for AIDS Services & Education Trust (ASET) and Richard works in banking. They met at an ASET Safer Sex Seminar for which Nigel is the instructor. I guess Richard was impressed with Nigel's knowledge of safer sex and has been hooked ever since (no pun intended). Happy Anniversary!

And, speaking of ASET, they will be celebrating two years of service to the Cape Town area. This is a very important milestone since the government of South Africa has banned all public AIDS and Safer Sex education efforts. Keep up the good work ASET!

BIRTHDAYS

A special HB goes out to my father, Carl du Pont, who is celebrating his birthday on March 14. He and my mother will be enjoying a quiet celebration at their home in Alabama. Here's a loving wish for "many more" to the most supportive parent, and a P-FLAG member at that, a gay child can hope to have.

Happy Belated Birthday to Vicki Herndon of Ringgold, Georgia. Vicki is Ringgold's local Mary Kay representative so you know she looks many years younger than she is. Happy Birthday!

Many Happy Returns to Don West in Cape Town, South Africa. I met Don on my recent vacation there while I was teaching Safer Sex Seminars. Don is 42

Phil Rafshoon celebrated his birthday on March 8.

and is an artist. Be sure to look for him at St. George's Mall if you ever go there.

Happy Birthday also goes out (on March 9) to Lauren Michaels, one of Atlanta's legends in the female impersonation/entertainment world. Lauren has moved on to "real girl" status so she is no longer performing in the gay clubs, but she's still having birthdays and still looks great. Happy Birthday Girl! We miss you!!!

Happy Belated Birthday to Philip Rafshoon who celebrated his big day on March 8. Knowing Philip he probably celebrated at the gym and then by showing off that fabulous body at most of the bars. Happy Birthday, you stud.

MARK du PONT

Does this issue of OCCASIONS look slim to you? It does to us and we need your help! So to make it easier on you folks out there, we have established an Occasions Voice Mailbox to call in your announcements. Just call (404) 325-7600 and follow the simple instructions.

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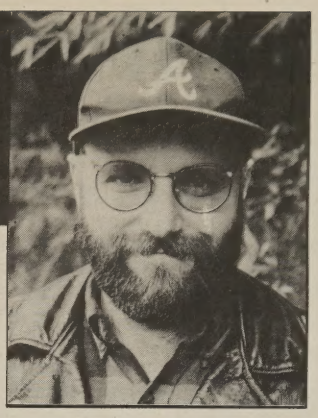
by AL COTTON



A Column, By Any Other Name...

I have been informed by my editor that it is time for this biweekly space that I occupy to have a name all its own—no more generic "First Person." All I have to do is come up with something that's clever with a little character. Right now.

This is not easy for someone whose entire adolescence was haunted by name issues. For a child named Alvin Horner Cotton, elementary school was awash with chipmunk jokes, while high school resonated, predictably enough, with witty repartee around the word "horny." Not to mention that wonderful adolescent tradition, The Name Game, where your high school newspaper asks the rhetorical question, "What if Al Cotton were Al Corn? Or Al Polyester?" Naming things is not easy for me, because I understand that a name has *consequences.*

Naming a column is serious business. It is the banner under which my ideas will fly. It will be the first thing (and perhaps the only thing) some people will ask when I tell them I write for SoVo. It may even show up in my obituary. It's like naming an alter ego.

The closest parallel to naming a column, another choice of alter ego, is the Gay Male ritual (do people do this outside the South?) of picking the right drag name. Now perhaps a gay man giving himself a silly female name to use with "the girls" is no longer a radical act of sexual politics. Perhaps it's really a minor infraction of politically incorrect behavior, one that slightly undermines the female condition—something you'd go get the hall monitor for if it happened in the high school restroom. But believe me, there once was a time when a woman named Mary walking in Piedmont Park on Sunday afternoon needed whiplash insurance.

But, no matter now P.C. you are, I'll bet that everyone has a guilty pleasure favorite drag name or two. Like that North Georgia park ranger drag queen, Tallulah Gorgeous. Or that transperson for the next millennium, Eva Destruction. Or my dear friend and fellow columnist, Lena Cuisine. (Don't mess with Lena—she's a big ol' girl with a hell of a poodle skirt.)

I, of course, have no drag name. Not because I'm too politically correct, and not because I've never done drag (though I haven't), but because I've never found the right one. The name you choose explains what you're doing—whether it's camp, Halloween-only, do-it-yourself therapy, or a way to pay the rent. Clearly, a drag queen named Mitzi Dynel will behave differently from one called Ruth Ann Morehead, or one called RuPaul. Sometimes I think I might actually do drag if I ever found the right name.

And for naming a column, similar criteria apply. Its name should describe what will appear in it. It needs to say something about the writer. Its columnist being gay, it *must* be clever and stylish, with entendre *at least* at the level of double. And no longer than five words.

And as with drag names, you know when you've got the column name right, and until you have it right, you know you've got it wrong. Back in SoVo's biweekly days, I wrote under the banner "Homoville, GA," which was okay. But "homo" has always made me uncomfortable (more so than Queer ever did) and not everyone associated it with Midtown, or knew of Homerville, Georgia. I mourned Homoville's passing only momentarily.

Since then, I've considered lots of alternatives. "Easier Said"—nice karma, but catchy and descriptive it's not. "Purple Prose"—from a previous column, but true purple prose is sensationalistic, and that's not me at all. "100% Percent" (explanation—people are forever putting an extra L on the end of my first name, because, I assume, All Cotton somehow looks more complete to the eye)—again, clever but it doesn't *say* anything.

I almost settled on "The Fabric of Our Lives". For those of you who don't watch television, that's from a commercial for a plant fiber that's grown widely throughout the South that I happen to share a name with. The next line of the commercial's dead-pan serious jingle refers to "the touch, the feel of cotton..." At this point, I'll pause while you insert your own punchline here.

But as much as I liked what it said, it sounded too much like a soap opera title that was rejected for "Soapdish," and had the added disadvantage of probably being copyrighted by the Cotton Institute. I also liked the image of a prism ("It takes light and turns it into a rainbow"—oohhh), but what can you do with that? Queer Prisms? Prism-ers of Love?

So today, March 3, two days past deadline, I chose—Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome to the paper—"Southern Queer-ies." It combines my region and orientation, which I consider the two characteristics that best define me. It's a little bit clever and indicates that I ask more questions than I give answers, which suits me fine. Let me know what you think.

And this seems the appropriate time to thank the people who put me in this space. First, Christina Cash and Leigh VanderEls, who built a true *community* paper that I feel honored to write for. Next, KC Wildmoon, who defined and created a space in this paper where people talk about life. Next, Gary Kaupman, who started me writing here and still works real hard to keep me from writing like the Vanderbilt graduate that I am (the Vanoids almost ruined me for writing to real people about real subjects).

And finally, to each of you who check out this space every so often. I find it hard to believe that so many people spend five minutes every two weeks to see if I have written something worth taking the time to read. It is one of the amazing and glorious gifts in my life, and I am honored and humbled by your compliments and criticisms.

To you, thanks—and I hope you like my "Southern Queer-ies."

Al Cotton is a native Southerner going on his tenth year in Atlanta, which frequently causes his reputation to precede him. He has occupied column space in Southern Voice for two years.

LETTERS

Maybe it's time to pack some heat

To the Editor:

I am shocked and outraged by what is only the latest in a series of violent acts against our community, namely the bashing of Thomas Stewart last February 6th. In the hopes of preventing more such tragedies in the future, I would like to share a few thoughts on the subject, and propose a solution.

I would submit that gay men and lesbians are frequent targets because we are percieved as easy targets. The redneck scum who live outside the perimeter feel they have free licence to beat us, kill us, and generally do whatever the hell they feel like doing to us. And why? Because they think we won't fight back.

Let's face it, Mr. Stewart may not have believed that he was placing himself at risk, but had he been just a little more security-conscious, he would have known better than to go walking around on the streets of Midtown alone and unarmed late on a weekend night.

Everyone pay close attention: there is not one—I mean NOT ONE—inbred, unwashed, slope-headed, white-trash breeder within a hundred miles of here that doesn't know exactly where we live, where we play, and where he can go hunting when he feels like "busting a queer." These so-called "people" are not interested in logic, reason, or negotiation. The only language they speak is that of violence, and if we are to survive we must learn to reply in kind. The police obviously don't give a fuck about us; it is time we began to fend for ourselves.

To hell with political-correctness. What we need in this community is a healthy dose of paranoia. I urge every man and woman reading this paper to purchase a firearm, learn how to use it, and to obtain a carry permit. (Personally, I recommend the Glock .45 ACP with Glazer Max-Safety rounds. It'll drop a fascist like a ton of bricks.) I also urge the water-holes in Midtown to set aside room for gun-check stations at the door, so people who are bar-hopping may travel armed from place-to-place.

Now let's say that Mr. Stewart had been packing some heat when those two bastards approached him on the sidewalk. Let's say he whipped it out when they brandished the baseball bat and called him a "faggot." Let's say he shot both of them dead. This is an obvious and classic case of deadly-force used in self-defense. It would finally be the bigot's turn to mourn their dead; it would finally mean that we had won—for a change.

I've had it with this pacifist bullshit. We live in a grim and dangerous world, and the survivors will be the grim and dangerous people. It is only when the bashers come to understand that we will be zealous in the defense of our rights will it be possible for them to respect us even a little. This will prove particularly important when the fundys start a drive to implement a law like the ones in Oregon and Colorado, and when they begin their campaign of violence to silence the opposition.

The choice is up to you. When Mr. Fascist comes a-knocking on your door, will you be the victor, or just another victim?

Sincerely,
Mike McCulley

AJC seems to want to keep military ban

To the Editor:

I wish to commend your staff writer, KC Wildmoon, for her objective reporting on the issue of the military ban on gays in the article entitled "Nunn-1, Clinton-0" which appeared in the February 4 edition of Southern Voice. Wildmoon writes with refreshing professionalism. Lately, I have read many articles in other newspapers that are powerfully biased.

Many people rely on newspaper reporting in order to educate themselves on current topics. In your case, Wildmoon is educating readers without venting her emotions. On the other hand, staff writers for the Atlanta Journal/Constitution write as if they are campaigning to keep the ban on gays in the military. Many of us have a strong passion for gay and lesbian rights and refuse to be ignored or misunderstood. I believe, with the help of President Clinton, gay and lesbian voices will be amplified, and the calls for equal rights will be understood as demands, not requests.

Other local newspapers must heed the strength of the power of the people and know that one in seven readers do not appreciate reading viewpoints in place of professional, objective reporting.

Sincerely,
Kelly J. Markow

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Dear Sir:

Last Tuesday, I found myself in Pensacola, spinning the dial in search of a weather report, when I stumbled upon the Montel Williams show. It is almost un-American to declare that I am not a television viewer, especially at that time in early morning, so I was not aware such a talk show existed. I feel obliged also to declare that it was the topic of the day, "Gays in the Military," which made me not switch to some other channel.

I am writing to you, first of all, to commend you for carrying the program. Secondly, but no less important, I would ask you to convey my compliments to the producer and the host of the show for presenting the topic in a very balanced and clear manner. I am very happy with the way Mr. Williams handled the panelists, even the obnoxious ones.

Sincerely,
Gilson Redrick

CORRECTION: The National March on Washington insert in SoVo vol. 6.1 included a misprinted phone number for the Georgia Organizing Committee for MOW. The correct phone number is (404) 662-4199.

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Come Saturday, though, it's playtime. She skydives. She skis. She'd like to learn to sail, but she gets seasick. Oh, and she takes care of her two Rottweilers and her cockatiel, who can whistle half of the Flintstones' theme.

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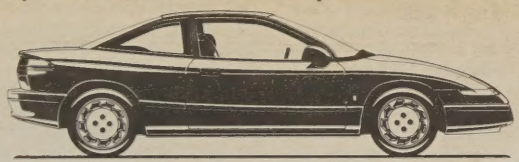

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EYE ON THE MILITARY

Another national group has organized to fight the ban on gays in the military. **The Nathan Hale Brigade** joins the Campaign For Military Services and the Gay and Lesbian Emergency Media Campaign in the ongoing battle against conservative efforts to keep the ban, but the groups differ widely in how they will approach the campaign.

The Campaign For Military Services was formed a few weeks ago by David Mixner, President Clinton's gay campaign adviser. The group will likely focus on inside political maneuvering to obtain their objectives.

The GLEMC will focus on education efforts such as a video entitled "Hate, Lies and Videotape" created to counter another video "The Gay Agenda" produced by a California Christian group. That video, distributed by Pat Robertson's 700 Club, depicts gay people in stereotypical ways, an interview with a medical doctor who says homosexuality is an illness, and two men who say they used to be gay but changed their sexual orientation because of the "sex-dominated" gay lifestyle. "The Gay Agenda" has been distributed to members of Congress and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to lobby against lifting the military ban. GLEMC's video points out that "The Gay Agenda" is a propaganda film similar to those produced by the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan. It too will be distributed to Congress and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The Brigade says it will take a more aggressive approach and out members of Congress who oppose lifting the ban to point out their hypocrisy.

"The rights of gays and lesbians may be determined by a handful of hypocritical representatives and senators whose private, 'closeted' behavior belies their public positions," Phillip Detterman, head of the group, told the Washington Blade. Detterman is a former Navy intelligence officer.

A poll conducted by the Los Angeles Times shows that nearly three-fourths of enlisted personnel oppose lifting the ban. Eighteen percent favored the change, and 81% predicted widespread violence if openly gay men and lesbians are admitted to the services.

Female enlistees were more apt to support the change, the Times said. The poll found 35% of women supported Clinton's initiative, while only 16% of male enlistees favored it.

No problems in Canada

American service people and congressional leaders still seem intent on ignoring reports from Canada that the Canadian military has experienced no disruption since that country dropped its ban on gays three months ago. Military officials there report no violence, and no resignations, since the change in policy. According to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, abolishing the restrictions "had no deleterious effect at all on the well-being of the military."

Discharge proceedings

A Marine who acknowledged his homosexuality on national television said last week that he doesn't regret his move and will fight attempts to discharge him.

"I don't think it's right for them to discharge people on the basis of their sexual orientation," said Sgt. Justin Elzie, stationed at Camp Lejuene in North Carolina. "I just don't roll over and let people walk over me. I'm going to fight it all the way."

Elzie received notice on Feb. 10 that he could be discharged.

A federal judge in Texas has refused to block a scheduled March 4 military hearing on the proposed discharge of a lesbian Air Force lieutenant stationed at Goodfellow Air Force Base in San Angelo.

In a six-page written opinion, U.S. District Judge Sidney Fitzwater ruled last week that 1st Lt. Heidi DeJesus, a 26-year-old supply officer, filed suit prematurely.

DeJesus was passed over for promotion to captain because of her relationship with an enlisted woman. Her partner, Airman 1st Class Laura Little, 22, received an honorable discharge on grounds of homosexual conduct the day before Clinton moved to lift the ban.

A retired Navy intelligence officer says that he is encouraged by Clinton's action. Lt. Cmdr. John Pauli, who worked with NATO and was entrusted with information relating to national security, said that he never came out during his 25 year military career.

"I think it's going to enlighten a hell of a lot of people, and, in the long run, it will be better for the services," he said.

Pauli received an honorary admiralship in 1988, and lives now with this partner of 15 years, Herb Grosby.

"Clinton is one President who had the guts to speak out against the injustice to gays," Grosby said. "For that, he'll go down in history."

Pauli agrees, adding that Clinton's stand will help gays and lesbians stand up for themselves. "When I was in the Navy, the only thing I could do was keep my mouth shut and do my job," he said. "I'm successful now and I have nothing to lose. We all have to learn to speak up."

Locally speaking

The Coalition to Lift the Ban on Gays and Lesbians in the Military has scheduled another rally on Saturday, March 27 at 1 pm in Piedmont Park. Scheduled to speak at the rally are Crae Pridgen, the gay man beaten by Marines in Wilmington, NC, and Steve Byers, a retired (heterosexual) Air Force captain. Byers will speak for the many straight veterans who support an end to the military's prejudicial exclusionary policy.

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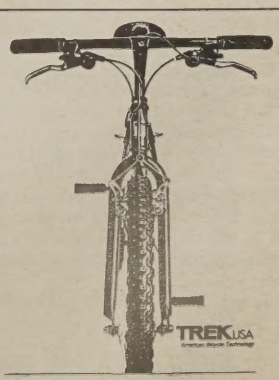

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Navy says gay-bashing charges are unfounded

Washington, DC—U.S. Navy officials claim that the murder of Seaman Allen Schindler was not a gay-bashing because the shipmate accused of murdering him had engaged in sex with other men, including the victim, before Schindler's brutal death.

A six-page sworn statement from a sailor who served with Schindler and other new information indicated that the killing might not have been motivated by homophobia, anonymous Pentagon sources claimed to the San Diego Union-Tribune.

"In the process of conducting interviews with witnesses," a senior naval officer said, "numerous people indicated that [defendant Terry] Helvey had engaged in homosexual acts, including some with Schindler."

Asked for comment, gay activist Michael Petrelis, who visited Sasebo, Japan to investigate Schindler's murder charges, was incredulous.

He charged that officials are lying in the case of Airman Apprentice Helvey, 20, who faces a first degree, premeditated murder indictment.

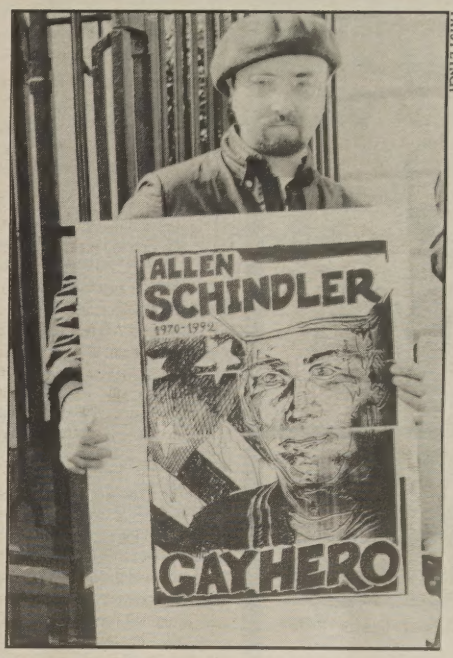
The sailor who gave the sworn statement said he had sex with Helvey twice. Navy officials would not identify him nor discuss his status.

Sexual conduct and homophobia by military personnel are issues in the campaign to lift the military's ban on homosexuals, a pledge of President Bill Clinton.

Meanwhile, related developments are under scrutiny:

• A 19-year-old Navy dental technician, Travis Brossard, said he was beaten, harassed, and threatened with discharge because of his friendship with Schindler and three others given the name "the Fabulous Five" by some sailors called "The Bashers."

• Petty Officer Keith Sims, who served with Schindler, said he saw five men attack Schindler outside the public restroom, two of whom dragged him inside. Sims said he repeatedly warned Navy officers about anti-gay harassment against Schindler and people perceived to be gay, including himself.



PATSY LYNCH

A Queer Nation/D.C. member protests the Navy's recent charge that the murder of gay sailor Allen Schindler was not a gay bashing.

• Scott Deimdiek of Morehead, MN, was found dead in a closet Jan. 24 in Okinawa with a belt around his neck. Officials won't confirm whether it was an attempt at orgasm, suicide, or murder.

Queer Nation/National Capital held a press conference to respond to the latest news from the Navy on the Schindler murder. Joining QN/NC at the conference was openly gay Republican activist Marvin Leibman, as well as Petrelis.

"This latest development reeks of the same homophobia presented by the navy during the U.S.S. Iowa's explosion," said Petrelis. "By charging that Helvey may have been gay, too, the Navy wants us to believe that this was just a queer relationship gone sour. Schindler was murdered in a military environment that fosters hatred of gays, and we demand justice."

The acting judge advocate general in Schindler's case, Rear Adm. William Schacte, also oversaw the investigation of the U.S.S. Iowa case. In that investigation, the Navy claimed that sailor Clayton Hartwig had set off the explosion because he was despondent over a failed love affair with another sailor. The Navy later was forced to admit that the explosion had been an accident.

The Navy set an April trial for Helvey, who refused to enter a plea. The Navy had told him he faced execution if he pleads not guilty.

Helvey also faces charges that he resisted arrest by two shore patrol officers, lied about his involvement in the bloody incident, and otherwise obstructed justice.

Schindler was beaten to death in a public restroom near the Sasebo Naval base on October 27. Another seaman, Charles Vins, was sentenced to 4 months and given a less than honorable discharged. Vins was charged with not reporting a crime, and received a reduced sentence for agreeing to testify against Helvey.

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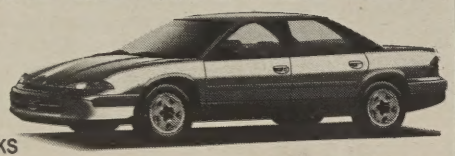
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Murder-suicide

Continued from page 1

nal damage to property with a March 25 trial date, and Landin temporarily moved in with a friend.

A few days later, Landin's truck was stolen from the Sevananda parking lot. Although the vehicle was not recovered, Niambi was considered a suspect in the theft. A week after the first incident, on February 15, police were again called to Niambi's home, where she had set five fires using piles of Landin's clothes throughout the house. Niambi then temporarily moved in with friends, and both women found new apartments and moved over the last weekend in February.

Landin was last seen on the night of the murder-suicide at around 8:30 pm at the Candler Park MARTA station by Kim Austin, a friend with whom she had spent most of the afternoon. Austin said that Niambi had called earlier in the evening and told Landin she had some money for her, but Austin added that she did not know Landin planned to go to Niambi's Decatur apartment.

Decatur police believe Niambi planned the murder-suicide that day, telling a friend to keep her 5-year-old daughter until 10 pm and asking friends to come by at that time as well. Members of the both women's families believe that entries in Niambi's journal indicate that she had planned the murder-suicide as much as two months ago, but police say they have not seen such a journal.

"We believe she had planned it all day. We can form an inference that she did plan to get Venus over to the apartment to kill her," said Investigator Wesley Harris. "There was no evidence they had been fighting. We believe she came up behind her and shot her."

A Santeria connection?

Investigators at the scene reported that Niambi's apartment contained "African cult type of ornaments around the room and an altar with various articles," as well as books on many types of spirituality, including Santeria, an African-Caribbean religion often association with voodoo. Those items led mainstream media to report that Niambi was a member of the Santeria religion, and that she had invited friends over later that evening, knowing that she and Landin would be dead, for prayer. One of those friends, Marlene Johnson, denied those reports.

"Bisa and I had talked earlier that day, and she asked me over to see her new place," said Johnson, who had known Niambi for 13 years and Landin for about two. "I picked the time, 10 pm, because that was when I got off work. No one mentioned any prayers."

A second friend also arrived at 10 pm to find investigators on the scene. That woman had been invited over to spend the night because Niambi told her she didn't want to be alone.

The media also pointed to numerous scars covering Niambi's body, inferring that those scars were part of a Santeria initiation ritual. Again, Johnson denied the charge, saying the scars were the result of years of self-mutilation stemming from sexual and childhood abuse.

"Bisa alleged to have been sexually abused by her older brother," Johnson said. "Her childhood in Asheville, North Carolina, was not pleasant. Her father was a minister, and the whole family had to 'look good.' She talked about being neglected and having no positive reinforcement for who she was."

"When she got into a relationship, she cut herself," Johnson explained. "She would say she had bad parts in her she was trying to get rid of so she could be loved. It was not some kind of religious ritual."

Johnson, who helped to clean the apartment the day after the murder-suicide, described the altars as similar to those of many other lesbians who have adopted women's spirituality as their "religious" path.

Pattern of violence

According to friends and at least one other former lover, Niambi's actions prior to March 2 fit a pattern, but that most of the details have only surfaced now, after her death.

"She had it together enough to present a calm face," Johnson said, "and she was isolated. None of us, certainly not the police, saw the whole picture."

Still, friends of both women questioned how the situation could have gone to such an extreme without somebody knowing. Many also expressed concern over Niambi's five-year-old daughter.

"Here's somebody that everybody knows is not well," said Helena Montgomery, "and nobody is doing anything. There's got to be a way—through the legal system, something—to get this woman the help she needs, and also to protect the child at the same time."

Other friends wondered why contact between the women continued, even after the first incidents that warranted a call to police.

"Part of it was Venus was afraid Bisa would leave town and she wouldn't be able to recoup her losses," said Sheila Savage, a Landin friend. "And I don't think she thought Bisa would hurt her. She cared about her, she was that kind of person. She thought Bisa needed and friend and she wasn't going to run away from her."

Other friends indicated that Landin may have been afraid to sever all ties with Niambi, a typical reaction in an abusive relationship.

"It's not easy to get out of that type of relationship once you get into it," said Kim Austin. "I think she was scared, but she didn't want us to know."

"The statistics we see show that women are in more danger [from an abusive partner] after they leave," said Virginia Brimmer, executive director of the Women's Resource Center of DeKalb County, a battered women's shelter. "And lesbian relationships are no different."

Brimmer added that abusive relationships, contrary to what many in the lesbian/gay community believe, are as common in gay relationships as in heterosexual ones.

"A study from the Michigan Women's Music Festival showed that 40% of the women said they had abusive relationships," she said. "The numbers are 40-50% in heterosexual relationships."

"Typically it's husband beating up on the wife, but we work male on male cases and female on female cases," said Decatur Investigator Harris, adding that the Landin-Niambi murder-suicide was not much different. "In a lot of ways it's very similar to other domestic violence cases we work. They were just both female."

Landin a great loss to community

"Nobody can fill the shoes of Venus Landin," said Charlene Cothran, a co-founder of Hospitality Atlanta, one of the many organizations that Landin was associated with. "Everybody knows her, from the mayor's office to hoboes on the street. She was always trying to bridge the gaps between everybody."

Landin had served as co-chair of AALGA since December 1990, as well as participating on the Atlanta Lesbian/Gay Pride Committee, the Atlanta Lambda Community Center Board, Hospitality Atlanta, Zami and the City Council's Lesbian/Gay Public Safety Task Force. She was also the mother of an 11-year-old son she hoped would join her in Atlanta in the near future.

To those who knew her, and worked with

CONTINUES ON PAGE 19

Religious right is crusading for money to keep the ban

Washington, DC—Religious right groups are sending a fresh wave of fund-raising letters into America's mailboxes, taking aim at President Clinton's attempts to lift the military's ban on lesbians and gay men.

"Are we about to become a hedonistic nation of unrestrained homosexuality, abortion, immorality and lawlessness?" asks a letter from Jerry Falwell the one-time head of the Moral Majority.

The mailbox fund-raising effort involves some of the religious right's best known activists, including Pat Robertson and Falwell, but also lesser-known organizations, such as the California-based Traditional Values Coalition and Florida-based Coral Ridge Ministries.

Other conservative groups also are flooding the mails to raise money to fight Clinton's policy, including a group led by former Reagan White House aide Oliver North, the Marine colonel at the center of the Iran-Contra scandal.

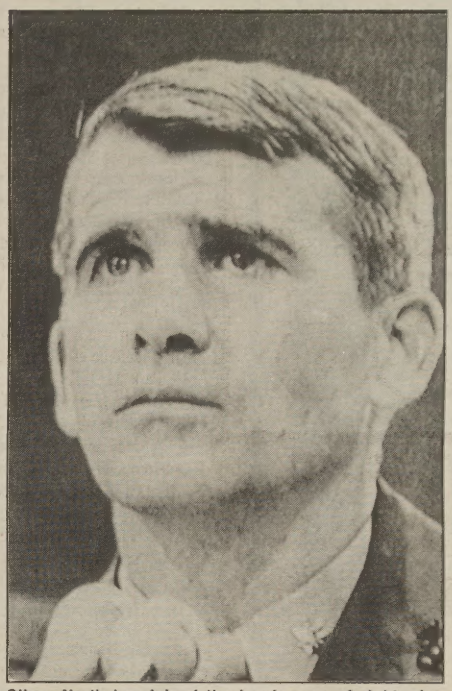
"It's great to have an enemy," said conservative consultant Craig Shirley. Among his clients is the American Conservative Union, another group trying to turn Clinton's position on gays in the military into a fund-raising boon.

"The returns have been just going through the roof," Shirley said. "It's not just a religious right issue. It's more of a cultural issue, a moral issue and a liberal issue and therefore has broader appeal among conservatives than just religious conservatives."

The use of direct mail to raise money is by no means confined to the opposition to Clinton's efforts.

The Campaign for Military Service, a coalition of gay-rights and other groups that support Clinton's policy, was recently established as a non-profit group and plans to issue a direct-mail appeal of its own soon.

"Mail is the staple for fund-raising by non-profit groups," said David M. Smith, spokesman for the Campaign for Military Service. The Human Rights Campaign Fund, a gay-rights group, already has used the dispute as a fund-raising tool.



Oliver North has joined the bandwagon of right wing fundamentalists who are determined to prevent the lifting of the ban against gays in the military

But for the religious right and conservative groups, it is the first test of their strength—and fund-raising abilities—since the Democrats took power in Washington after a dozen years of Republican rule.

In his letter, North employs a strategy that has been denounced by gay-rights and liberal groups: warning of the risk of AIDS to military personnel if gay men are allowed to serve openly.

"Injuries, open cuts and bruises are not unusual," North wrote. "With people dying on the battlefield of wounds sustained in combat, we cannot afford to increase the risk of AIDS, hepatitis and other diseases which are prevalent in the homosexual community."

Smith criticized such tactics as "whipping up hysterical fear against us and using that fear to raise money."

In his letter this month, Falwell wrote that he will revive the Moral Majority, disbanded in 1989, if he receives enough donations to pay the "tremendous costs" of running the organization and buying television time.

"I believe God has called me to use television to call America to national repentance," Falwell wrote. "Jerry Falwell is back and ready to do battle!"

Another recent appeal was mailed by James Kennedy, leader of Florida's Coral Ridge Ministries.

In a Feb. 16 letter, Kennedy told recipients if they pray, sign a petition to Clinton opposing the move and send Kennedy money, "you'll be doing your part to stop the cancerous growth of immorality if America."

Clinton has promised to implement his policy in mid-July, a date Kennedy focused on right from the outset of his letter.

"Dear friend in Christ," he wrote, "July 15, 1993, may well be a day of moral infamy in the United States—unless you and I and other caring Christians across this country do something to stop it."

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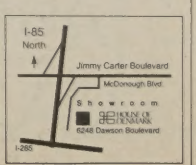

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FIGHTING THE RIGHT

In Colorado, the sponsors of Amendment 2 continue to oppose attempts at a compromise on the homophobic amendment. Throughout the campaign, **Colorado for Family Values** phrased its support of the amendment it sponsored in terms of denying gays and lesbians "special rights." Now, after both a Colorado Springs attorney and a Colorado legislator have proposed amendments that would ban discrimination based on sexual orientation but also prohibit special rights such as hiring quotas, CFV founder Will Perkins has admitted in a press release that he does, in fact, consider the right of lesbians and gay men to hold a job or keep a home "special rights." To be declared, as a class, immune from bias in those situations is to receive an extraordinary legal recognition, he said in his statement.

"The Walta [Greg Walta, the Colorado Springs attorney] and other so-called compromises are not compromises at all," Perkins said. "They represent nothing less than total surrender to militant homosexuality."

Meanwhile, a new poll conducted in Colorado shows that the population still misunderstands the amendment. The majority of respondents, 54%, said gays should be allowed to serve in the armed forces, and 77% agree that gays are no different from anyone else except for their choice of partners. But a majority of 51% said they would vote against repealing the constitutional amendment, and 56% agreed with the statement, "When homosexuals talk about gay rights, what they are really saying is they want special treatment." And 74% said they thought the main reason people voted for the amendment was "because they are against laws that would give homosexuals a type of special or protected status."

On the boycott front, the Colorado Bar Association has initiated a kind of internal boycott, voting to move its annual convention out of Colorado Springs when Mayor Robert Isaac refused to write a letter welcoming the Association's gay and lesbian members. The convention will be held in either Keystone or Snowmass. Colorado Springs is the home of the CFV.

And some 400 anti-amendment protestors weathered below-freezing temperatures last week as they held a candlelight vigil outside a meeting of the CFV in Boulder.

"We're here because a lot of people are angry that [CFV] lied to the people of Colorado," said Jabe Hickey, president of Boulder Organization for Nondiscrimination. "We're not here to be militant homosexuals. We just want to confront the people who hoisted lies on the voters and ended up passing a law that discriminates against us."

Other state legislation

The author of a civil rights bill in Arkansas has dropped sexual orientation from its protected categories, saying that "so long as [gay rights provisions] are there, I can't get the bill passed."

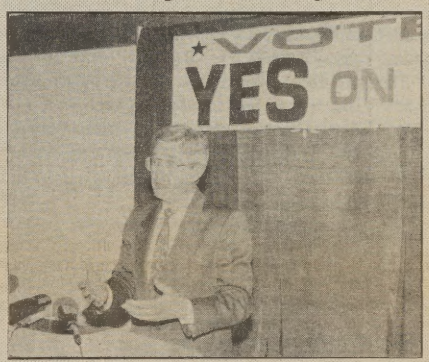
"The press coverage...gave the impression that the bill was a gay rights bill, and it wasn't," said Sen. Bill Lewellen.

The New Mexico senate passed a bill law week guaranteeing the civil rights of gay men and lesbians, accompanied by a debate that covered morality, law, private behavior and AIDS. Opponents made several unsuccessful attempts to amend the bill.

A Washington House panel has cleared a measure declaring malicious harassment of gays and lesbians illegal while striking a similar provision that would have made it illegal to maliciously harass a person based on gender. Washington's National Organization for Women lobbyist, Lonnie Johns-Brown, said the decision to drop gender was acceptable with the understanding that it will be pursued next year. She said lawmakers were having trouble drafting language to apply to gender.

And in Michigan, a state board last week approved a petition drive for a Colorado-style amendment to that state's constitution.

George Matousek, sponsor of the amendment, told a group of protestors after the board meeting, "Do whatever the hell you're going to do. I'm ready."



Will Perkins, head of Colorado for Family Values, says compromise efforts on Amendment 2 "represent nothing less than total surrender to militant homosexuality."

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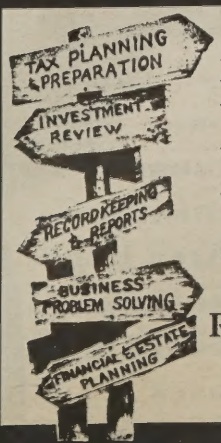

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ALERT
January 27, 1993

PETITION
TO PROHIBIT THE LIFTING OF THE BAN ON HOMOSEXUALS IN THE MILITARY

Dear Friends,

President Bill Clinton is determined to lift the ban on homosexuality in the military. If this happens the government of the United States will have recognized sexual preference as a protected minority and as an acceptable alternate behavior. Government funds will be spent to facilitate homosexuality and pedophilia. This will destroy society and the family will be the ultimate victim. The President's action is promoting perversion. The President is WRONG! He has yielded to a militant ideological push to force acceptance of homosexual behavior by lifting the ban on homosexuals in the military.

Since moral behavior is the bedrock of military strength and the family is the teacher of moral behavior, we ask you to sign the petition, mail it to Family Concerns, and enclose a financial gift to help us in this effort.

I will personally deliver these petitions and will contact leaders nationwide to do the same.

God bless you,
Nancy Schaefer

FAMILY CONCERNS PETITION

TO PROHIBIT THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND CONGRESS FROM LIFTING THE BAN ON HOMOSEXUALS IN THE MILITARY AND FROM RECOGNIZING SEXUAL PREFERENCE AS A PROTECTED MINORITY AND AS AN ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATE BEHAVIOR

- **Whereas,** homosexuality is unnatural, immoral, and anti-family; and
- **Whereas,** homosexuality presents a basic immaturity that results in rebellion; and
- **Whereas,** homosexuality is a behavioral characteristic that stems from a deficit in the early years of life; and
- **Whereas,** the homosexual is much more promiscuous (sometimes having had over 500 different sexual partners); and
- **Whereas,** the homosexual is much more pedophilic (73% of male homosexuals have had sex as adults with boys age nineteen years and younger); and
- **Whereas,** the homosexual seeks physical satisfaction in the form of sodomy and is encouraged to be checked for parasites and amoebes yearly;
- **Therefore,** the undersigned person does hereby petition the President of the United States to maintain the ban on homosexuals in the military, to protect moral behavior as the bedrock of military strength, to protect the traditional family as a most needed institution of virtue, and to protect our sons and daughters from sexual deviation.

Signed _____ Date _____

Please Print Your Name _____

Address _____

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PLEASE COPY AND DISTRIBUTE THIS PETITION!

Georgia General Assembly Update

The 1993 session of the Georgia General Assembly is nearing an end, and Larry Pellegrini, Lobbyist for GAPAC, reports several positive outcomes for the gay and lesbian community.

According to Pellegrini, all of the restrictive sex education bills have died in committee.

The resolutions in both houses asking Congress to continue the military ban against the service of lesbians and gay men appear to be stuck in committee. The above petition was circulated by Family Concerns to members of the House.

The Senate bill that would allow police officers to require blood tests of persons they come into contact with does not appear to be headed to the floor for a vote.

Pellegrini states that during the next nine months the gay and lesbian community will continue its campaign for sodomy reform under the bill introduced by Senator Ron Slotin and the Comprehensive Sexual Assault Bill in the House.

The session is expected to end the third or fourth week in March. Pellegrini says he will continue to monitor floor debate in case an unfriendly amendment is attached to an existing bill.

CRAIG PATE

Murder-suicide

Continued from page 16

her, Venus Landin's death is a tremendous loss.

"To the African American community, we've lost someone who was a leader, and also a worker," said Duncan Teague, who was Landin's AALGA co-chair. "That's how she led people—she got in there and did the grunt work. Nothing was ever too humble to her."

"And to the larger lesbian/gay community, I don't know if they can ever fathom what they have lost," he continued. "Venus was willing to deal with the racism, and see the bigger picture."

"It's incomprehensible," said Marcia Okula, Mayor Maynard Jackson's special assistant for lesbian and gay affairs. "She was soft spoken, quiet, laid back, and then to have such a violent end. Her death is a tragedy, a tremendous loss to the community and to the city."

"She was willing to take risks," said Teague, "but she would much rather be playing softball, or having a beer and kicking back with friends."

In between committee meetings, Landin did just that. Her bowling team came in first in the Hospitality Atlanta bowling league, and she played softball and coached basketball for the organization. Landin connected with everyone, say friends and associates.

Landin moved to Atlanta from Saginaw, Michigan. She was hired by Sevananda last August, working as a manager in the general merchandise department.

"There's a lot of grief and anger," said Teague, "and part of it is that it occurred within the community. They were both connected in the black women's community."

KC WILDMOON

A memorial service and community discussion for Venus Landin and Bisa Niambi will be held on Sunday, March 14 from 1:30-3:00 pm at the 1st Existentialist Congregation, 470 Candler Park Dr. For information, call 688-7246 after 10 am.

For help if you are involved in an abusive relationship, call Name the Violence Support Group for Battered Lesbians at 688-9436. For information about services available for battered lesbians or other information, call Name the Violence at 822-9570 or the Georgia Advocates for Battered Women and Children/Lesbian Task Force at 524-3847.

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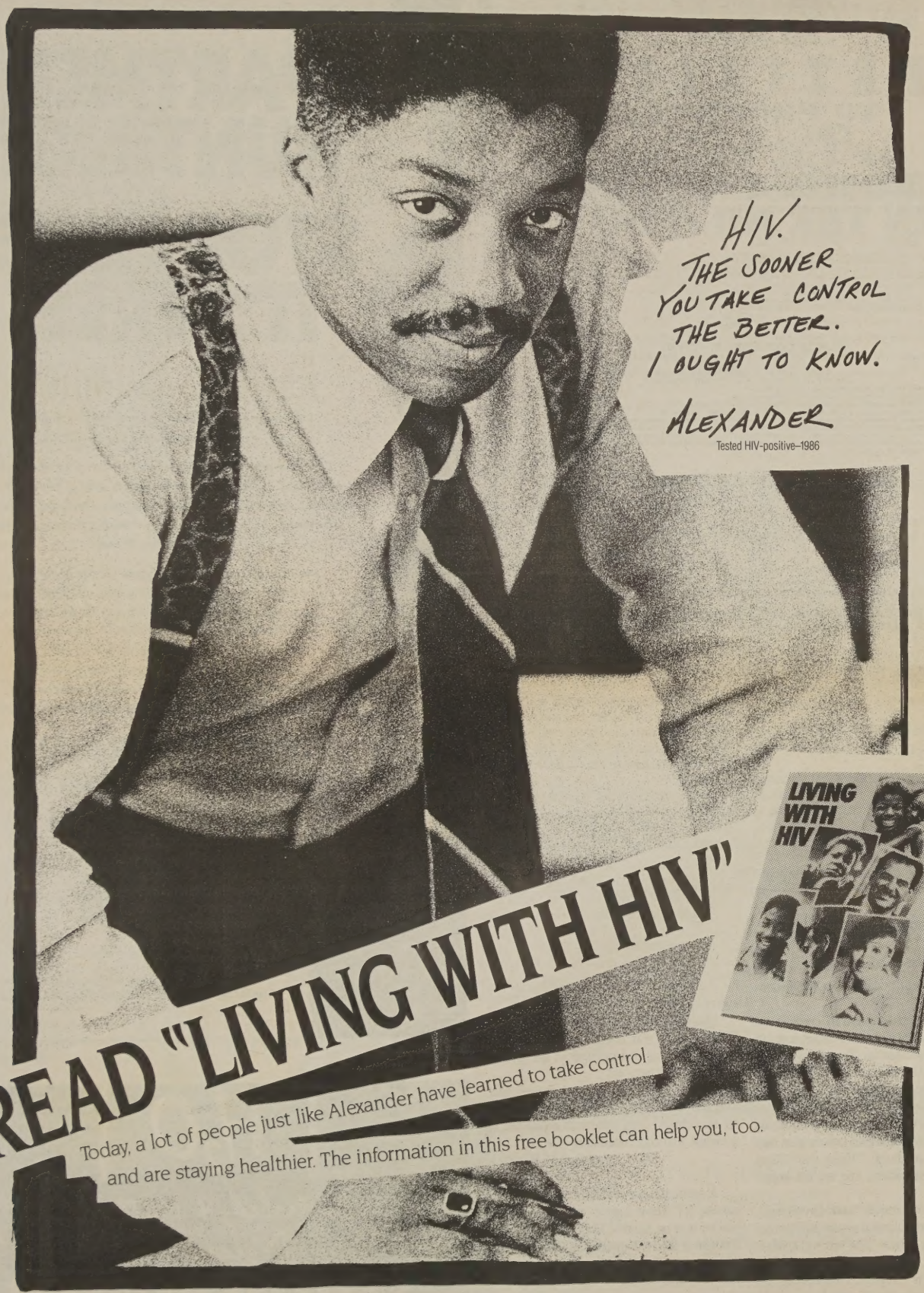
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OUT & ABOUT

BROADWAY SPRING SEASON

TONY AWARDS

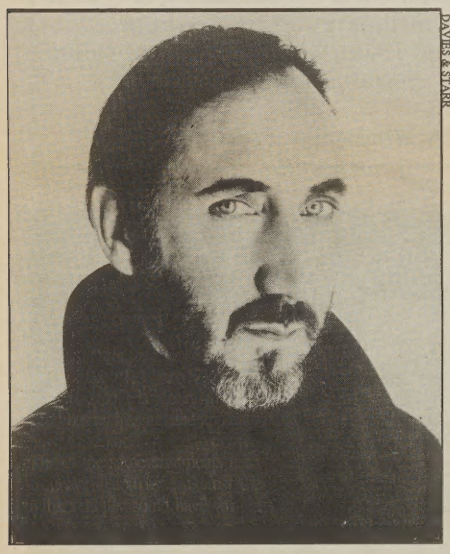
Remember the old days when the Broadway theater season began in the fall? You could tell it was autumn by the number of new shows waiting to open. No more.

Broadway now hibernates for much of the year, waking up in March for a two-month frenzy of activity geared to the deadline for Tony Award nominations, which this year is May 5.

Tony Awards mean increased box-office receipts, or at least that's what a lot of producers think. And the closer you open to the nomination deadline, the more chance you have of getting a nomination—and maybe even of winning. Never mind that last season's Tony-winning best play ("Dancing at Lughnasa") premiered in October and the best musical ("Crazy for You") arrived in February. Keep your shows fresh in the minds of Tony voters. Open late in the season, say the savvy show-biz minds.

Here then is a list of new productions theater goers can expect to find on Broadway before summer. As in all things theatrical, be warned that the operative phrase is "subject to change without notice."

March begins with **The Goodbye Girl**, a big musical boasting big names. Bernadette Peters and Martin Short are the stars, Neil Simon the author, and Marvin Hamlisch the composer. That power list doesn't include Gene Saks, a longtime director of Simon's shows, including the playwright's last hit, "Lost in Yonkers." Saks was fired during the musical's bumpy Chicago tryout and replaced by Michael Kidd.



DAVIES & STARR

Pete Townshend

The show is based on Simon's movie success about a single mother (Peters) and her young daughter who share an apartment with a struggling actor (Short). It opens March 4 at the Marquis Theater.

Four—and possibly five—other musicals may open.

Another show with a turbulent history is a reworked and recast **Kiss of the Spider Woman**. The musical collapsed in the summer of 1990 as the first project of an elaborate laboratory for new musicals at the State University of New York in Purchase.

Two years later, Canadian producer Garth Drabinsky resurrected "Spider Woman," playing it in Toronto last summer and then taking the show to London where it won the Evening Standard Award as best musical. Chita Rivera is the exotic leading lady, while Brent Carver and Anthony Crivello play inmates in a South American prison. Music and lyrics are by John Kander and Fred Ebb, the team that wrote "Cabaret," "Zorba" and "Chicago." The musical opens on May 3 at the Broadhurst Theater.

Pete Townshend of The Who created **Tommy** as a rock opera, and it found other lives as a ballet and a movie. Now it's a Broadway musical, with Michael Cerveris as the pinball-wizard title character. Des McAnuff, who last worked wonders on Broadway with Huck Finn and "Big River," directs. Look for it at the St. James Theater on April 22.

Blood Brothers seems to have been running in London for as long as "The Mousetrap." Now Americans can get a chance to see what the fuss is all about. The musical about twins separated at birth and the different paths their lives take opens April 25 at the Music Box Theater. Book, music and lyrics are the work of Willy Russell, the man who created "Shirley Valentine."

Mike Todd—before he married Elizabeth Taylor and before he produced the film "Around the World in 80 Days"—is the subject of a musical biography called **Ain't Broadway Grand**, arriving at the Lunt-Fontanne Theater on April 18. Mike Burstyn plays the flamboyant showman, while Debbie Shapiro Gravitte peels off as Gypsy Rose Lee, Maureen McNamara portrays Joan Blondell and Gerry Vichi is the great stage comedian Bobby Clark. Mitch Leigh, who wrote "Man of La Mancha," supplied the music.

The beleaguered **Annie Warbucks** has been trying to get to Broadway for so long that some have renamed the show, "Granny Warbucks." The long-awaited sequel to "Annie," it has had financial problems after a major investor pulled out, leaving the musical short of its $5.5 million capitalization.

If its determined producer Karen Goodwin can raise the funds, look for "Annie Warbucks" to open at the Neil Simon Theater on April 21, exactly 16 years after the original premiered there. Harve Presnell of "Unsinkable Molly Brown" fame is the shiny-domed Oliver Warbucks and Lauren Gaffney is the intrepid orphan. Sandy is now played by a gentle, shaggy-haired mutt named Cindy.

The spring's most anticipated drama is the two-part, seven-hour **Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes** by Tony Kushner. The production received strong notices when it opened in December at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles, but, oddly enough, its co-directors were let go and four of its eight cast members replaced.

George C. Wolfe, who steered "Jelly's Last Jam" to success last season, now is the director of choice for this epic about AIDS in the 1980s. Part 1, called "Millennium Approaches," checks in April 29 at the Walter Kerr Theater. The second play, "Perestroika," will arrive in the fall, and the two parts will then be done in repertory.

The Sisters Rosensweig by Wendy Wasserstein already is a big hit off-Broadway. It should prove equally successful in its transfer to Broadway's Ethel Barrymore Theater. Wasserstein's boulevard comedy officially reopens March 18. It concerns the London reunion of three sisters played by Jane Alexander, Madeline Kahn and Christine Estabrook. Robert Klein also co-stars.

David Henry Hwang and Lanford Wilson—two playwrights with past Broadway successes—try their luck again. Hwang, author of "M. Butterfly," returns with **Face Value**. It's a comedy written in response to the "Miss Saigon" fracas when a white British actor starred as an Asian in the Broadway production of the musical. Hwang's play concerns a dust-up over a Fu Manchu song-and-dance extravaganza. Mark Linn-Baker of television's "Perfect Strangers" stars. "Face Value" opens March 21 at the Cort Theater.

Wilson, who scored with "The Fifth of July" and "Talley's Folly," has **Redwood Curtain**. The three-character play concerns an Amerasian girl looking for her lost father. Jeff Daniels, Debra Monk and Sung Yun Cho make up the cast. The premiere is set for March 30 at the Brooks Atkinson Theater.

The Song of Jacob Zulu, a South African play by Tug Yourgrau about a young man accused of bombing a shopping mall, makes its way to New York via Chicago's Steppenwolf Theater. It opens March 24 at the Plymouth Theater. Zakes Mokae, an actor long associated with Athol Fugard, heads the cast.

The Roundabout Theater Company has scored the season's biggest hit so far with a brilliant revival of "Anna Christie," starring Natasha Richardson and Liam Neeson. The company's next production is George Bernard Shaw's **Candida**, starring Mary Steenburgen, Robert Fox and Robert Sean Leonard. The comedy has a March 25 opening date.

The only other revival is **Three Men on a Horse**, courtesy of the National Actors Theater. The 1935 farce by George Abbott and John Cecil Holm stars Jack Klugman, Tony Randall and Julie Hagerty and opens April 4 at the Lyceum Theater.

The season's toughest ticket, though, is off Broadway, not on. It's **Putting It Together**, a musical revue of Stephen Sondheim songs and starring Julie Andrews in her first New York stage appearance in over 30 years. The lucky theater is the 299-seat Manhattan Theater Club. The opening date is April 1. There's not a ticket to be had for the entire run which ends May 23. Yet if the show is a critical hit, Broadway could beckon.

MICHAEL KUCHWARA

THEATRE REVIEW

PORTRAITS AT TWILIGHT

Different Voices, Atlanta's newest theatre company, presents "Portraits at Twilight," an evening of high energy, rough-around-the-edges but still great fun gay-toned hijinks. Memories of old TV shows introduce the evening as the cast, in stagehand black, all caper about singing the theme songs from "Gilligan's Island," "Sesame Street," and "The Brady Bunch."

Probably the most original work is a curious short piece entitled "The Marlboro Man," a conversation between two strippers who dance in lingerie in front of peepholes. In between short "performances" they chat about the "Marlboro Man," whom one of them claims to have known. Samantha Enzmann and Ashley Fordonski play their New York working-class women for laughs, with accents whining and snarling. But this short, troubling piece is meant to be drama, not parody, and the director and actors did not go beneath the surface.

Then things go bump in the night at Seven Chimneys in "This Brooding Sky," a lesbian Gothic romance spoof by lesbian playwright Sarah Dreher. Innocent Mary Beth (Kathy E. McKee) arrives at the mysterious mansion presided over by a suspiciously large-bosomed housekeeper (Jamie Newland in drag). Sally J. Robertson, as moody Stephen, swaggers butchly with a riding crop, thrilling Mary Beth with her insolent attentions, while Sharon J. Lane, as saccharine neighbor Emmaline, swoops and glides genteelly about the stage. R. Kent Wilson, as the Narrator, rumbles ominously like James Earl Jones sitting in for Alistair Cooke.

Sharon J. Lane brilliantly shouts, flirts, and smolders in a anti-suffragist monologue taken from a 1913 parody of anti-suffragist arguments by an actual suffragist, Marie Jenny Howe. The audience thoroughly enjoyed booing, hissing, and applauding each irrational argument. This was a good choice to dramatize since it illustrates how some of the same arguments used against women voting were trotted out and used against the Equal Rights Amendment. Phyllis Schlafly could have written some of these lines.

The productions could have been more polished. The impression was that the evening was like much gay and lesbian theatre: done for an uncritical audience so glad to see a show that reflects our world view that we forgive what we would not forgive in a mainstream theatre. I'd like to see these actors take on something more ambitious next time—and dig deeper.

But not a moment was dull, and the cast seemed to be having so much fun that even when someone dropped a line, it was picked up and corrected without missing a beat—or a shriek.

CHARLENE BALL

AGMC

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CALENDAR

11 THURSDAY

TOWN HALL MEETING. A meeting to discuss the lifting of the ban on gays in the military, and to specifically collect comments to be sent to Washington. 7:30 pm. First MCC Church. 800 N. Highland Ave. 231-5751 for more info.

THE WAKEING. OutProud Theater presents this one act play by Bill Bagwell along with its companion THE MADNESS OF S. GREGORY BANE tonight through Mar. 28. The plays feature three men who have very different responses to the devestation of AIDS. Features actor Theo Harness, directed by Stephen Petty. TULA Auditorium. Call 609-9590 for reservations.

HEAVEN. Kelly Hill from Theatre Rhinoceros in San Francisco performs work from award-winning poet Rob Goldstein at the SAME Auditorium at TULA Galleries. The performance begins at 8:00 p.m. Through Mar. 28. Call 609-9590 for details.

NORTH AND SOUTH. During the summer of 1954 photographer Bernice Abbott traveled the length of U.S. Route 1 with her Rolliflex. The High Museum at Georgia Pacific Center is displaying fifty of the black and white photographs of cities and towns along the Atlantic seaboard. The exhibit can be seen through July 9. Call 898-9283 for more info.

12 FRIDAY

SHEDDING LIGHT ON AIDS. The Good Samaritan Project and Emory HIV/AIDS Mental Health Training Project present an educational, spiritual and personal perspective for those offering care and support for persons living with AIDS. The seminar begins tonight from 6:30-10:00 p.m. and continues tomorrow at 8:30 a.m. at Briarcliff United Methodist Church, 4105 Briarcliff Rd. NE. To register call 873-4589.

OPEN HOUSE AT ALFA. The Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance offers a night of games, conversation, and food tonight beginning at 8:00. 64 Clay St. Call 378-9769 for more info.

JAMIE ANDERSON. The recording artist will be performing from her latest album, "Center of Balance." Part of the Assoc. for Women in Psych. convention. Call 299-4277 for more info.

THE FILM SOCIETY. Horizon Theatre Company presents the story of an innovative teacher who tries to shake things up at a South African boarding school. The play by Jon Robin Baitz runs through Apr. 18. Call 584-7450 for tickets.

THE GOOD DOCTOR. Stage Door Players present this Neil Simon comedy based on the eccentric characters of Russian author Anton Chekov. North Dekalb Cultural Center, 5339 Chamblee Dunwoody Road. Performances are Thurs-Sat at 8:00 and Sun at 2:30 through Apr. 4. Call 396-1726 for ticket info.

BILL KROYER. Computer animator and director of "Ferngully, The Last Rainforest" will speak at the Cobb County Civic Center tonight at 8:00 p.m. For information call 785-2911.

13 SATURDAY

AFWC DANCE. The Atlanta Feminist Women's Chorus is hosting a fundraising dance tonight featuring DJ Lenny Lassiter beginning at 8:00 at the 1st Existentialist Cong. Tickets are $5 in advance. Call 378-5570 for details.

HALF THE KINGDOM. Seven Jewish women women from Canada, Israel and the US strive to reconcile the religious and cultural traditions of a patriarchal society with contemporary feminist principles in this documentary presented by the High Museum. 8:00 p.m. Call 898-9284 for info.

VERDICT. Tri-Cities Theatre in East Point presents the Agatha Christie melodrama Thurs-Sat at 8:00 p.m. and Sun at 3:00 p.m. through Apr. 10. Call 681-6091 for reservations.

ADAM ANT. The legendary British rocker performs at the Roxy as part of his "Persuasion" tour. The show begins at 8:00 p.m. Call 233-ROXY for ticket info.

CAT SHOW. More than 300 of the top cats throughout the country will compete today at the Georgia Dome. The show benefits the Atlanta Humane Society and runs from 10:00-5:00. Call 875-0586 for details.

14 SUNDAY

ALGPC AUCTION. A fine art auction featuring works by more than 40 artists to benefit the Atlanta Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee will be held in the Sheraton Colony Square today beginning at 3:00. Original etchings, engravings and lithographs by some of the greatest European masters including Cezanne, Chagall, Goya, Picaso and Rembrandt. $10 per couple. Call 220-8111 for further info.

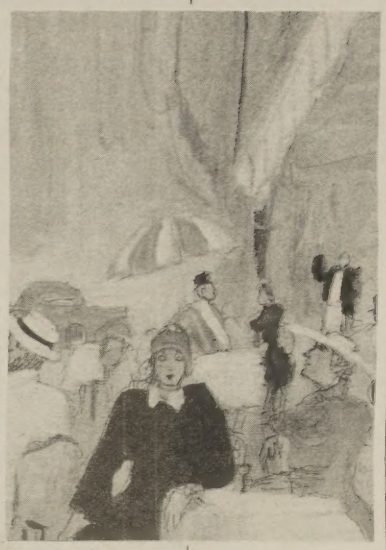
PAINTERS, PAINTING. Notable 20th century artists talk about the whys and hows of painting as an art and a way of life in this film presented by the High Museum. The screening begins at 2:00 p.m. Call 898-9286 for info.

SONGS OF THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION. The Atlanta Virtuosi presents a musical journey from the 1910 Revolution to the present. The program begins at 4:00 on the Agnes Scott Campus. Call 938-8611 for details.

15 MONDAY

OUT IN ATLANTA. Atlanta's local lesbian and gay cable program can be seen tonight at 10:30 and again Wed. at 5:30 p.m. on Cable Channel 12. This week's show features a replay of the Lesbian/Gay Inaugural Events in Washington, D.C.

GAY USA. A gay and lesbian news show produced in New York includes national and international coverage. Cable Channel 12, People TV. 11 p.m.



16 TUESDAY

NANCI GRIFFITH. The Queen of Folkabilly performs with the Blue Moon Orchestra tonight at the Woodruff Arts Center. The performance begins at 8:00. Call 249-6400 for ticket info.

CAMELOT. Robert Goulet stars as King Arthur in the epic musical about the Knights of the Roundtable at the Fox Theatre through Mar. 21. To charge tickets call 249-6400.

BETRAYAL. The Alliance Theatre presents Harold Pinter's romantic drama directed by Michael Olich. The show can be seen Tues-Sun through May 16. Call 898-1127 for ticket info.

17 WEDNESDAY

OPERATION SURVIVE. NAPWA offers a six-week training course covering specific topics related to surviving HIV. Each session of the seminar is offered twice weekly, on Wed 7:00-9:30 p.m. and Sat 11:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Call 874-7925 for more info.

POSITIVE LIVING. This locally produced show about people living with AIDS can be seen on People TV Channel 12 at 2:30 p.m. and again on Sat at 10:00 p.m. It also airs on City Channel 6 at 5:00 p.m. on Thurs.

THE LADDER. Theatrical Outfit presents the musical examining the climb up the ladder in corporate America. Performances are at 8:00 p.m. Wed-Sat and 3:00 p.m. on Sun through Apr. 18. Call 872-0665 for ticket info.

Pictured: ABOVE: The Atlanta Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee presents a fine art auction to benefit Pride on March 14 at Colony Square Sheridan. Illustration by Isaac Maimon. ABOVE LEFT: Playwright Bill Bagwell's two new works, "The Wakeing" and "The Madness of Gregory Bane," open at the TULA Auditorium on March 11. BELOW: "Daytona Beach" from "North and South," a photography exhibit by Bernice Abbott opening March 11 at the High Museum at Georgia Pacific Center.

ONGOING AND UPCOMING

LETTICE & LOVAGE. Through Mar. 13. Theatre in the Square's hit production of an eccentric tour guide, and a rigid personnel director, Lovage, who tries to repress Lettice's behavior has been extended. Tues.-Sat. Theatre in the Square, Marietta. 422-8369.

TONY WINSTON. Through Mar. 13. Popular jazz pianist/singer Tony Winston, first cousin of new age pianist George Winston, performs at The Coach and Six Restaurant. Three performances nightly Thurs.-Sat. Call 872-6666 for further info.

VANESSA. Through March 14. Capitol City Opera Company presents Samuel Barber's Pulitzer-Prize winner at Callanwolde Fine Arts Center. The story of a love triangle is set in 1905 Russia. Fri. and Sat. at 7:30, Sun. at 3:00. Call 872-5338 for further info.

PORTRAITS AT TWILIGHT. Through March 14. A trip into the twilight zone of the American experience, Different Voices Theatre Company presents a trio of pieces with a twist which requires audience participation. Features the gender-bending gothic spoof "This Brooding Sky." Thurs.-Sun. at 8:00 p.m. at the 14th Street Playhouse. Call 370-1350 for more info.

ONCE ON THIS ISALND. Through Apr. 4. This exotic musical fantasy with the passion, exuberance and fire of the Caribbean, captured 8 Tony Awards last year. Set on an island in the French Antilles, the action takes place on one night as a group of peasants wait out a violent storm. Alliance Theatre. Wed.-Sat. 892-2414.

HIV TREATMENT STRATEGIES IN 1993. Mar. 18. NAPWA presents Martin Delaney of Project Inform speaking on the latest information on treatment and drugs for HIV disease. 7 pm. Colony Square Sheridan, Sheridan Room. 874-7926 for more info.

RALLY TO END PREJUDICE IN THE MILITARY. Mar. 27. This rally in Piedmont Park coincides with HRCF's "Operation Lift the Ban" weekend, a 4-day nationwide event Mar. 25-28 in which 20 cities will hold rallies and town meetings to support lifting the military ban against gay men and lesbians. In Atlanta, Crae Pridgen, a gay man beaten by Marines shortly after President Clinton announced his intention to lift the ban, will be principal speaker. 1 pm. 231-5479 for more info.

13TH ANNUAL AZALEA DANCE. Mar. 27. The Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance presents its annual spring dance. 8 pm. 1st Existentialist Cong. 470 Candler Pk. Dr. 378-9769 for more info.

ATLANTA FEMINIST WOMEN'S CHORUS. Apr. 10. One show only from this phenomenal chorus. Special guests from The Voices of Hospitality. 8 pm. Ga. Tech Theatre.

1ST ANNUAL SOUTHERN VOICE COMMUNITY AWARDS. Apr. 17. This benefit for Atlanta Lesbian & Gay Pride and the Atlanta Lambda Center will recognize and honor members of the community. Entertainment, food and stroll Zoo Atlanta at your leisure. Doors to the Zoo open at 6:30 pm. Awards ceremony begins at 8 pm. 876-1819 for more info.

NATIONAL MARCH ON WASHINGTON. Apr. 25. Over 1 million are expected in Washington for a 10-day schedule of over 200 related events, including the March itself on Apr. 25. Call 1-800- 832-2889 for info on travel, accomodations, events, etc. Call now!

6TH ANNUAL HRCF DINNER. May 22. A black-tie evening of political inspiration, entertainment, silent auction, cocktails and dinner with 1,500 members of the gay and lesbian community. Tickets are on sale now. $150. For more info call 662-4280.

Bill T. Jones' Dancers Explore Life's Contradictions

New York—Ten dancers weave across the stage, never making a place for one of their number. The outcast is awkward and earnest, with a shadow of a beard and a costume that's part ballerina, part bordello.

Lights out. When they go back on, our "ballerina" is alone, stripped to briefs. He scurries, desperate for a hiding place, until the other dancers return like a sartorial calvary to stuff him into a white shirt and pants. He whimpers "thank you" as the curtain comes down to laughter and applause.

This motley crew is the Bill T. Jones-Arnie Zane Dance Company doing "Speeding...Tantrum." It's what they do best: wringing humor and tragedy from the contradictions of modern life, and challenging strict definitions of what dance and dancers should be.

"For me, that's what dance is about," said Bill T. Jones, the company's co-founder, artistic director and most compelling performer.

Jones is well-equipped to take on his chosen themes.

He is the urbane, globe-trotting son of migrant farm workers; the one-time acting student who brings text and plot to avant-garde dance; the statuesque dancer from upstate New York who forged a 17-year relationship with a short, photographer-turned-choreographer from Queens, Arnie Zane.

Zane, Jones' lover and partner, died of AIDS in 1988.

Jones, 40, talks easily—something to be expected in someone who holds so little back on stage. But he is reserved on one point, refusing to answer questions about his health for fear that would become the focus of attention. It has been reported that Jones has the HIV.

Jones has not been silent on the general subject of illness and death. His most ambitious work, "Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin—The Promised Land," was testimony to suffering and survival.

The evening-long 1990 work can seem frenetic, with as many as 40 dancers on stage for some segments, performing to a score by jazz saxophonist Julius Hemphill and snatches of text by Martin Luther King Jr., Sojourner Truth and rap poet R. Justice Allen.

The piece's still point is a heart-wrenching dance solo Jones performs as a minister with whom he shares the stage. The minister recounts the travails of Job, a good man who holds onto faith despite losing his children, his wealth and his health.

Bill T. Jones-Arnie Zane & Company

Then Jones, still breathless, engages in a conversation with the minister about why man must suffer.

"I'm not a great editor, I'm pretty intuitive," Jones said of his urge to put so much raw emotion before an audience.

"Last Supper" premiered at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, was well received at the 1992 Spoleto Festival and was the subject of a PBS documentary last year.

This season the company performed new works, including "Speeding...Tantrum" and "Love Defined," along with older pieces, including Zane's "The Gift—No God Logic," before full houses in Manhattan and on tour.

While traveling over the last year, Jones contacted cancer societies and AIDS hotlines that put him in touch with people who talked to him at length about life and death, he said.

Their gestures and, especially, their words are being incorporated into his next large-scale project, "Still Here," to premier at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1994.

"Word is important to me," said Jones, who chatted with Zane on stage during their early duets, has staged a "dance opera" and is reading through plays with an eye toward creating a "dance play."

He traces the interest to his early training in acting. He enrolled in college as a path to Broadway, but was distracted when he first saw a dance performance at the State University of New York at Binghamton.

Jones recalls coming across a Life magazine in a laundromat or barbershop and finding a photograph of a scene from a Balanchine ballet that featured Arthur Mitchell, founder of the Dance Theater of Harlem.

"I remember it moved me," said Jones. "It was the first time I was aware of this art form, and it was very beautiful for me."

Jones' father, Augustus, had been a migrant farm worker, following crops up and down the Atlantic Coast for much of his life. In 1955, Augustus settled in New York in search of stability and a good education for his 12 children.

"My whole world view was shaped by that act," Jones said. "He took us into exile."

While his parents, Southern, rural blacks, continued working harvests during the summers and doing "all sorts of things" the rest of the year, Jones said he and his brothers and sisters went to school and were assimilated into a different, whiter world. "We began to speak differently than our parents. Then, with the '60s, we began to think differently," Jones said.

He learned to balance black and white, city and country, a sense of being isolated in white Wayland—and the freedom that gives—with a need for community and tradition.

Without that background, Jones said, "I don't think I could have fallen in love with Arnie Zane," or worked with him for 17 years.

The two met in 1971. Their duets began to gain notice in the 1980s and they formed their New York-based company in 1982.

At the 10-year mark, Jones is looking ahead, wondering where the troupe will be 10 or 20 years from now.

"If the company is not still around...there's something about the spirit of the company that will survive," Jones said.

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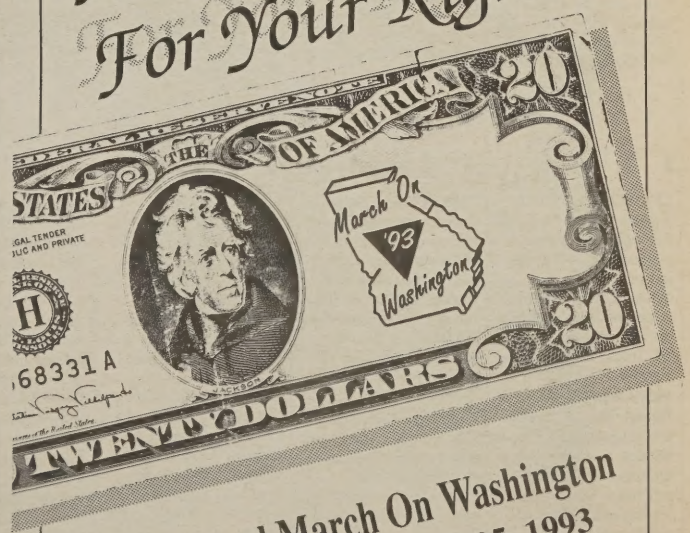

The National March On Washington
April 25, 1993
The Georgia Organizing Committee for the March On Washington (GOCMOW) desperately needs your contribution to continue their work. This money will help with local fundraising, contributions to the National March Committee in Washington and enable them to send PWAs to Washington.
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AFTER HOURS

DANNY ROBLE

Burkhart's has become a favorite gathering place for a wide range of party people over the years and can always be counted on as a center of activity. Whether it's a game of pool upstairs or Karaoke downstairs, the large, comfortable bar is a home away from home for everyone and a fun mix of people adds to the character of the bar. So it is natural that this, one of the most popular bars in Atlanta, should be the scene of a benefit for the National Committee for the March on Washington on Sunday, March 14. The promoter of the benefit, who needs no publicity, prefers that the spotlight be focused on the other performers in the show. These include the well known and well loved Leigh McClelland, whose beautiful voice is often heard at concerts and benefits around Atlanta, new-on-the-scene comedian Terry Howell, megavocalist Jan Riley, and if her busy schedule permits, the legendary DeAundra Peek.

Because Burkhart's never charges a cover, donations for the March on Washington will be accepted at the door. The fun begins at 8:30 pm on March 14—be there, especially if you cannot go to Washington.

For many people, myself included, a car is simply a means of getting from one place to another—but to some people a car is much more. For gay men and women who feel this way, there is a club which allows fellowship with like-minded enthusiasts—the **Lambda Car Club**. Now over ten years old, the LCC has chapters throughout the United States, Canada and Europe. The Atlanta-based Dogwood Region chapter has just under 100 members from the five Southeastern states. The main focus of the group is on collectible and special interest automobiles.

The LCC is planning a day trip from Atlanta to Anderson, South Carolina on Saturday, March 13 to tour an antique junk yard and to visit a retired Buick dealer's collection of '40s, '50s and '60s Buicks. Membership Chairman J. C. Conway invites us to "See when Roadmasters were really road masters." Membership is not necessary to go on the day trip and interested persons are asked to meet at the Tara Theater on Cheshire Bridge at LaVista. If you would like more information on the LCC Dogwood Region, write POB 11705, Atlanta, Georgia, 30355.

The much anticipated Super Style Show at 800 East was an unqualified success. Attendance at the marathon affair was well over 1,000 and the fashion on the runway was virtually non-stop. Congratulations to Wayne Sizemore, Ed Woodham, Eunika, Nathan, Bill, and everyone else who worked so hard to pull it off.

Netty, Clermont Lounge, 1992 is one of the photos in the exhibit "Dancing Naked in the Material World" opening March 27.

After leaving the Style Show, it was off to the **Metro** where the faithful had gathered to see the Friday night Eleganza show. Of course, it was Trina Saxxon, Barbie Q, DeAundra Peek, and Scyntilla Vortex who stole the show at the Super Style Show in a "club kid" fashion show put together by Cissy Rimwell.

The Metro is the place to be—glamorous blonde Gilda Golden mixing drinks behind the bar, the lovely Tuesday Knight, who is a former Miss Continental New York, on the door and a warm fire blazing on the hearth in the front room. Toss Eleganza into the mix along with a gorgeous group of fans and the recipe is complete.

Later, my two companions practically dragged me across the street to the **Gallus**. This basement bar is home to a colorful crowd and for those who like to people-watch, the entertainment is endless. There, I ran into glamour girls Sabrina and Tallulah Banks who also had just arrived from 800 East where the audience went wild over Sabrina's original designs modeled by Sabrina herself, Tallulah, China Fox, and Lauren LaMasters.

If you're in a dancing mood, the place to be is the First Existentialist Congregation at 470 Candler Park Drive on Saturday, March 13 at 8:00 pm. The event is a dance being held to benefit the **Atlanta Feminist Women's Chorus**. The spin doctor will be the "bad girl" herself, Lenny Lassiter.

Check out the March issue of Details magazine for an interview with homeboy/girl **RuPaul**. Even a recent Sunday issue of the Atlanta Journal/Constitution compared RuPaul's recent flood of publicity to Madonna's. You better work!

And speaking of working, be sure to catch **Dancing Naked in the Material World** at Emory Framing and Gallery beginning March 27. Photographer Marilyn Suriani Futterman has captured the essence of exotic dancers in this exhibit which is a result of 12 years of research into the lives of strippers, The exhibit was recently shown in New York at the FDR Gallery, coinciding with the publication of her book and her appearance on the Sally Jesse Raphael Show. Futterman, to get first hand knowledge of her subjects, worked as a waitress at several strip clubs in town getting to know the strippers, "the rules she must abide by, the people she must deal with, and the relationships—both good and bad—forged between the women."

The exhibit opens March 27 with a reception and book signing at 7:30 pm. Emory Framing and Gallery is at 2126 N. Decatur Rd.

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Atlanta author has a hit with first book," Ammonite"

Nicola Griffith's first novel, **Ammonite**, (Del Rey Discovery/Ballantine, © 1992, $3.99 paperback, 350pp.) is a fine example of what good science fiction is all about. So fine in fact that Griffith, an Atlanta resident and Southern Voice book reviewer, has been named a finalist for a Lambda Literary Award in the Lesbian Science Fiction/Fantasy category for her book.

"Ammonite" follows anthropologist Marghe Taishan through a series of life-altering decisions. She signs up with the SEC (government) who's in bed with the Company (imagine the company in charge of the show in "Aliens"—profit mongering, planet pillaging, etc.). Her mission is to try out a vaccine for a DNA-altering virus run amok on the planet GP (Jeep) which has killed all of the men and many of the women originally sent there. It's a culture that's

been out of contact with humanity for two or three hundred years—an indigenous population that is all female. Taishan also discovers that if the vaccine doesn't work, the company will abandon the planet and everyone on it.

She lands at the off-worlder's base, Port Central, not trusting the representatives of Company and SEC. The commander there, having risen to her position by the demise of all of her superiors and knowing too that her people will likely be abandoned on the planet, tries to make an alliance. But Taishan, determined, sets off northward into winter, despite warnings of hazards and death, to find the origins of the native people.

The first third of "Ammonite" ranks with some of the finest pure science fiction ever written: the reader follows Marghe Taishan down the long corridors of Estrade, the station orbiting above Jeep, from the safe confines of A section to the virus-contaminated D section, before finally arriving on the planet surface. From there, the story gradually becomes less of a science fiction novel and more speculative in nature, but Griffith's art does not allow this shift to detract from the power of the piece. The story is well tuned to the science fiction reader, but accessible to those who've never dabbled in the genre.

Griffith expertly avoids many pitfalls of lesser science fiction: contrived explanations for situations that do not make sense, alien names a reader can't pronounce that halt the flow of any dialogue, or—the particular flaw of lesbian science fiction—that a world of all women must be a perfect (read boring) place.

Taishan is a gutsy, compelling lead character, occasionally reminiscent of Cirocco Jones, the main character of John Varley's "Titan" series, although Taishan is less brash than Jones, and often more sophisticated.

But a stellar main character alone does not a fine story make. Griffith's dialogue flows smoothly and not only conveys the story, but fleshes out even the smallest of characters. Taishan, as strong as she is, never eclipses the others.

Most impressive is Griffith's well-researched use of biochemistry, biology and medicine to explain the affects of the virus and its effect on the world's inhabitants. The terminology is not so complex that it forces the reader to haul out a medical dictionary just to figure out what the hell is going on, but is confident enough to assure the reader of the complexities of the virus. Griffith allows Taishan's knowledge, her study of biofeedback disciplines, to be the door to our understanding.

"Ammonite" cannot be categorized as only lesbian science fiction. The central focus of the novel is not women loving women. For most of the planet's inhabitants, men are not existent and never have been. Do not let this dissuade you. The subtlety with which Griffith deals with lesbianism in her world is a refreshing change from the base-the-whole-plot-on-coming-out type story gays and lesbians are too often used to reading.

While at times "Ammonite" screams too loudly of a sequel (and hints at a prequel as well), it only serves to whet the appetite for more from this promising author.

JOAN T. SHERWOOD

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Thurs, Mar. 18, 7:30pm.
NANCY KAVANAUGH
Local expert on Feminist folk-tales entertains with her unique stories.
Thurs, Mar. 25, 7:30pm.
BOB TIMMS & PATRICK CONNORS
Local therapists present their book, "Embodying Healing."

Atlanta artist donates sales to Childkind

Thom Daniel says that he was born an artist. He painted beer bottles with model car paint as a kid growing up in Conyers, Georgia. His parents bought him his first art supplies which he used to paint the portrait of a neighbor. He explains that his naivete led him to break the "rules" by using watercolor on canvas. He has since learned that breaking the rules with his art is what he likes to do.

Daniel will exhibit over 100 of his pieces March 13 and 14 in Little Five Points with the proceeds benefiting Childkind, a foster placement agency for children with HIV. The artist, who is thirty-eight years old, states that he has produced some of his best work since learning that he has AIDS.

Thom Daniel with one of the 100 pieces he hopes sell at an exhibit this weekend to benefit Childkind.

"I turn out the best artwork that I've ever done. It's taught me to be the person I've always wanted to be. It has brought out a lot of creativity in me."

Although his illness forces him to work from his bed most of the time, he continues to find the energy to produce paintings and sculpture.

"There's like a force that comes over me and overtakes me. There's just a force—I guess it comes from above—and it just overtakes me. I never know what is going to come out."

What has come out is an exciting collection, from sculpture created with found objects to watercolors displaying Matisse-influenced boldness.

His favorite shapes, boomerangs and circles, appear throughout his work. He especially admires the female form and faces are a common subject for many of his pieces. Flat black dominates many of his forms, but he is not afraid to use more brilliant shades in his paintings.

Daniel's favorite piece, entitled "Mother and Child," is formed from discarded pieces of furniture and moulding from ships. A black wave representing death carries the smaller figure while the mother extends her arms over the ocean to save the child's life. This image also seems to symbolize Daniel's reason for taking part in this weekend's benefit for Childkind.

"We've all got to help with this terrible thing and I thought I could do my part."

"A Day of Hope" takes place at 447 Moreland Avenue on Saturday March 13 from noon until 6:00 p.m. and Sunday from 2:00 until 6:00 p.m.

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FOOD

Chef Shares Favorite Recipes For St. Patrick's Day

In Ireland, St. Patrick's Day is a religious occasion and a cause to celebrate. As a child, I remember waking up on March 17, attending mass and waiting for the St. Patrick's Day parade. Leprechauns by the thousands led the march of rejoicing that's so much a part of this green and glorious feast of Ireland's great saint!

The following are some of my favorite Irish recipes. Serve the lamb fillets with boiled or steamed brussels sprouts and mashed potatoes. And to the Irish everywhere: Happy St. Patrick's Day!

Lamb Fillets with Onion and Sage Puree

2 tablespoons butter
1 large onion, finely chopped
1/2 cup chicken broth or water
1 teaspoon freshly chopped sage
2 teaspoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
6 tablespoons sour cream
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
Salt and ground black pepper
8 lamb fillets (rib or loin chops), each 1 1/2 inches thick
Sage sprigs to garnish

Melt the butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion and saute, stirring frequently until the onion is a light golden color, about 5 minutes.

Add the chicken broth and water, sage and lemon juice and bring the sauce to a simmer. Simmer for about 5 minutes. Remove it from the heat. When cooled, stir in the sour cream. Puree the sauce in a blender and set aside.

Heat the oil in a frying pan. Dust the lamb with the flour; season it with salt and pepper to taste. Saute the lamb for about 2 to 3 minutes on each side. Remove them from the pan and place on a heated platter or plates. Pour off any fat in the frying pan, add the sauce, and heat the sauce over low heat just until it is hot. Don't let the sauce come to a boil. Pour the sauce over the lamb and garnish with sage. Makes 8 servings.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

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FOOD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

Watercress Potato and Bacon Salad

1 pound very small new potatoes, scrubbed
4 strips lean bacon, chopped
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 tablespoon white-wine vinegar
Salt and ground black pepper
1 bunch watercress, rinsed, dried and roughly chopped

Cook the potatoes in boiling salted water until tender. While the potatoes cook, saute the bacon until it is browned. Remove the bacon bits with a slotted spoon, drain on absorbent towels; reserve.

Pour off all but about 1 tablespoon of the bacon fat; add the oil and vinegar to the pan. Stir well; heat over low heat until hot. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Drain the potatoes. Cut them in half and transfer to a heated serving dish. Scatter the crumbled bacon bits on top; add the chopped watercress. Pour the warm dressing over the potato salad and toss well, until all of the ingredients are coated. Serve the salad while it is still warm. Makes 4 servings.

Bally Cotton Currant Soda Scones

4 scant cups sifted all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking soda
2 teaspoons cream of tartar
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup sugar
6 tablespoons lard or shortening
1/2 cup currants
1/2 cup golden raisins
1/4 cup chopped citrus peel
3/4 cup buttermilk, well-chilled
2 tablespoons whole milk

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Sift the flour, baking soda, cream of tartar and salt together. Place in a mixing bowl and stir in the sugar.

Add the lard or margarine and rub it into the dry ingredients just until the mixture looks mealy. Add the currants, raisins and citrus peel. Stir in the buttermilk just long enough to make a fairly smooth dough.

Turn the dough out onto a floured work surface and pat it into an even layer about 1/2-inch thick. Use a biscuit cutter to make round scones, or cut the dough into wedges.

Place the scones onto a lightly greased baking sheet, brush the tops lightly with some milk and bake in a preheated 425-degree F oven for 8 to 10 minutes, or until the scones are golden and risen. Serve warm. Makes 20 scones.

PATRICK HEALY
Patrick Healy is a chef-instructor at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y.

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Dish

THERE'S A FINE LINE BETWEEN TELLING THE TRUTH AND TALKING TRASH

No Gay Love Connection: Not that you may care but we found it most interesting what Love Connection host, Chuck Woolery, had to say about the possibility of having gay couples on his inane show. In a recent issue of Entertainment Weekly Mr. Woolery responded this way to the question. "No. You think it would work if a guy sat down and I said 'Well, so where did you meet and so and so?' then I get to the end of the date and say, 'Did you kiss?' Give me a break. Do you think America by and large is gonna identify with that? I don't think that works at all." Well, I guess he told us! And it appears that Mr. Chuck, like so many uneducated 'phobes, assumes every gay person is male. Seems to Dish the LC host is in desperate need of some education. Perhaps GLAAD could take on the job. Another note of interest was the writer's (Kate Myers) use of the word "dish" in her introduction to the piece. According to Myers, Woolery was the perfect person to "dish with" on Valentine's Day. We think not. A man who has no imagination most certainly cannot dish.

Home Sweet Homo: Dish hates it that Met Home is now published only six times a year. But there's good news for gays (at least men) in the March/April issue. Not one, but two, of their nine "Winners" this year are male couples. Two gay artists from Dallas (TX) are Winners for a second time. Check it OUT!

An End to Wicked Ways?: We know that homos sometimes feel assaulted by the Christian right, but we've always been thankful for what a kind and accepting lot gay and lesbian Christians generally seem to be. We know plenty, and not one has ever tried to convert us from our pagan ways. We, in turn, do not proselytize either. But heathen bikers, it seems, are not so lucky. Seems that the Christian Motorcyclists Association (with some 39,000 members nationwide) fans out across the country

Love Connection host Chuck Woolery says gays don't belong on his ultra heterosexual show.

and tries to convert other bikers to the ways of the(ir) Lord. The CMA even holds an annual "Run for the Son." One former Hell's Angel is said to have changed the name on his Moto-Guzzi from "the Whore Bike" to "The Jesus Bike" as a result of the ministrations of the CMA. So far as we know, the CMA has no plans for an out reach to gay/lesbian motorcycle groups. Just imagine the outcome of that! Dykes on Christian Bikes? Harley Homos for Him? Heaven help us all!

It's a Weird World After All: Hillary Rodham Clinton says that imaginary chats with Eleanor Roosevelt helped her survive the stresses of last year's presidential campaign. Dish was, at first, a bit taken aback by this bit of news. But then we decided that we like the idea of the first lady having an intimate spiritual connection with a lesbian, closeted though she may have been. And Goddess knows she could have done worse—it could have been Pat Nixon!

Cards & Letters: Good news on "One Life to Live" (2 PM daily on Ch. 2), where openly gay teenage character Billy has taken the big step and introduced his (more than a) friend Rick to his parents. Billy's mom is tres cool, but dad is a tad hot and bothered. Producers plan to put the relationship on the backburner for a while, but you can be sure that the young queer couple doesn't disappear entirely by sending a letter of your support to Ms. Linda Gottlieb, Executive Producer, One Life to Live, ABC-TV, 56 West 66th Street, New York, NY 10023.

Dish on the Wire: Dish would like to acknowledge our friend William (and several other anonymous Dish diggers) who regularly fax (or mail) us tidbits for this space. Which is another way of saying, "If you have Dish, we want it." 876-2709 is the fax number; PO Box 18215, Atlanta, GA 30316 for those who prefer the mail.

STARSIGNS

MARCH 11-MARCH 17, 1993

Well, let's all take a nice deep breath and relax for the rest of Pisces. Mercury, Venus, Jupiter and Pluto are all in apparent retrograde motion which means there is a lot going on beneath the surface and things are not quite as they seem. Retrogrades can be very useful if you are willing to be patient and pay attention to what is going on between the lines.

ARIES, your 12th house of dreams, visions and the unconscious and your 4th house of home, family and private life continue to be active. You may be feeling a little restless and yearn to get away, but it's better to deal with life at home. **TAURUS**, if you have thought about another job or asking for a raise where you are, be sure you are clear in your own mind about your talents, abilities and specific contributions you have made. Make a list and keep adding to it, until it is complete. Dear **GEMINI**, TIME OUT! If you have been running around, meeting yourself coming and going, then you need to stop and give yourself a break. Take time to relax, get oriented and give your busy mind a chance to quiet down. Less action, more sleep!

CANCER, this can be a very powerful week for you, even with Pluto retrograde in your 5th house of passion and creativity. You may be able to find depths within yourself that you are not completely familiar with, so take time for quiet and creativity. **LEO**, if you are feeling a little bit invisible, you may not be in the right places at the right times which can mean you need to pay more attention to your instincts and intuition. Trust your inner sense and relax. Everything will be all right! **VIRGO**, with the Sun and Mercury moving through your 7th house of close personal relationships and partnerships, you may have some very interesting folks circulating through your life right now. Look closely, someone very special may be there.

LIBRA, if you are confused about making a major decision that could have a long-term effect in your life, then be sure you are making the choice based on your own personal needs and priorities rather than the needs or wants of another person. **SCORPIO**, if you are not feeling absolutely super lately, you may be picking up on the confusion, hurts and anger of other people who are trying to resolve major issues and don't know exactly how to do it. Tuck in your radar and focus on beauty. **SAGITTARIUS**, the momentum of your rather unique and energetic personality may pick up as we approach Spring and Uranus slowly moves ahead of foggy ol' Neptune. Go for it, but please keep your feet on the ground and have fun!

CAPRICORN, so much change, so little time to adjust, right? Well, this may be the perfect time for a massage, a regular swim or even a quiet evening with a good book. Take very good care of your body and do your best to stay relaxed and at ease. **AQUARIUS**, Spring is just around the corner, so spruce up, get some regular exercise and start creating a social life if you have just been sitting around at home waiting for someone special to find you hiding in the cushions. Time for fun and excitement! Happy Birthday, **PISCES**! If you haven't done anything really spectacular and exciting for your birthday, then call your favorite Virgo and get things organized. Have a party, have some good ol' fashioned fun and roll right through the doldrums!

MARY BAILEY RULE is a professional astrologer who specializes in personal and relationship chart interpretation as well as crisis management. She can be reached in Santa Fe at (505) 982-3104 to order charts or arrange a chart interpretation.

Dykes To Watch Out For

WAGON HO
©1993 BY ALISON BECHDEL
NOT BAD, CLARICE. DID THE DEALER PAY YOU NOT TO TRADE IN THAT CLASSIC '77 PICKUP OF TONI'S?
DID I MENTION THAT THE RADIO EVEN DISPLAYS THE CALL LETTERS OF THE STATION YOU'RE TUNED TO?
GREAT. HAS MO SEEN IT?
YEAH. SHE SAID I WAS A SHAMELESSLY MATERIALISTIC, CARBON MONOXIDE-SPEWING MENACE, AND THAT IF I HAD ANY SENSE OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY I'D RIDE THE BUS OR, BETTER YET, A BIKE.
GOD. I MISS HER.
HI, BABE! LOOK WHO I FOUND WHILE I WAS DRIVING AROUND AFTER WORK TRYING TO IMPRESS GIRLS IN OUR NEW STATION WAGON!
HARRIET! HI! CAN YOU STAY FOR SUPPER?
I'D LOVE TO. WHOA, TONI! PUTTING ON A LITTLE WEIGHT THERE, HUH?
YEAH, ALMOST AS MUCH AS CLARICE.
IT'S REALLY WEIRD. SHE GET'S PREGNANT AND I GAIN TEN POUNDS.
OUR MIDWIFE SAYS THAT'S NOT UNUSUAL. SOME PARTNERS EVEN GET SYMPATHETIC MORNING SICKNESS.
YEAH, WELL, LET'S JUST HOPE I DON'T GET SYMPATHETIC LABOR PAINS.
SO HARRIET! WE'VE BEEN SEEING YOU AROUND A LOT WITH ELLEN TUFEL. RUMOR HAS IT YOU'RE AN ITEM!
TONI!
NO, IT'S ALL RIGHT. IT'S TRUE. WE ARE.
REALLY! SO HOW'S IT GOING?
WELL, ACTUALLY IT'S WONDERFUL! I'M HAPPIER THAN I'VE BEEN IN A LONG TIME.
MMM! DINNER SMELLS GREAT, HON! WHAT'RE WE HAVING?
SO ARE YOU IN LOVE OR WHAT?
BIG TIME.
LENTIL STEW, MY FAVORITE! YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE!

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COMMUNITY NEWS

GAPAC Four new members of the board were recently elected to GAPAC, Georgia's only gay/lesbian political action committee. The new board members are: Annie Archbold, a trustee for the Atlanta Lambda Community Center; Randal Lautzenheiser, a longtime gay activist from Ohio; Ceci Mitchell, former media coordinator for Roadbusters and founder of Lucina's Music; and Sarah Swint, co-founder of Lesbians Over Fifty. Co-chairperson Ed Stansell, commenting on the board elections said, "We're working toward gender parity on the board. I'm really excited. In general, we have more talent on the board than we've ever had." Stansell also pointed out that the board has seven vacant positions earmarked for people outside the metro Atlanta area. GAPAC employs a full-time lobbyist at the Ga. Legislature, rates political candidates' stands on gay/lesbian, women's and HIV issues, and is a major contributor to the Ga. AIDS Coalition, an organization dedicated to lobbying the legislature on HIV/AIDS related issues. Anyone interested in joining GAPAC can call (404) 872-8095.

The Atlanta Gay and Lesbian Arts Festival now has submission forms for all mediums—visual, performing, literary and artist market. Last year's festival was a success and the tradition will continue October 8-17, 1993. Call and leave your address and we'll mail the form to you. (404) 874-8710, or write: AGALAF, PO Box 55475, Atlanta, GA 30308. Volunteers are also needed now to help organize, fundraise and promote AGALAF '93 and consecutive years. Meetings are held every month on the 3rd Tuesday, 7 pm at Common Ground (corner of 11th St. and Juniper). The next meeting is March 16. In addition, interviews are being conducted to collect stories from lesbians and gay men on their experiences coming out. Parts of these stories will be included in "1 in 10/Coming Out Stories," a dance/theatre collaboration between S. Faybell MaHee and Jim Chappeleaux. The piece will be included as part of the Atlanta Gay and Lesbian Arts Festival in Oct. 93. Minorities within the lesbian and gay communities are encouraged to participate in this cross cultural development. Call (404) 874-8710 to schedule an appointment.

Atlanta Plans Leather Pride Celebration The Atlanta Lesbian Gay Pride Committee has announced the first annual Leather Pride Celebration, sponsored in conjunction with the Atlanta Eagle, Mohawk Leather and The Heretic. As the kickoff for Atlanta's Lesbian Gay Pride Festival, Leather Pride Week will be comprised of city-wide activities to be held the week of June 13-20. The week will begin on Sunday, June 13 with the first anniversary celebration of Mohawk Leather, and will culminate with Southeast Drummer Weekend, June 18-20. Varied activities are planned, including a night out with Atlanta's leather clubs, a leather flea market, cookout and several benefits for the Pride Committee. On Saturday, June 19, the Mr. Southeast Drummer/Southeast Drummerboy contest will be held at The Eagle. A final schedule of events will be released shortly, but inquiries may be directed to the Pride Committee, Post Office Box 54024, Atlanta, Georgia 30308, or The Eagle, 306 Ponce de Leon Avenue, N.E., Atlanta, Georgia 30308. In addition, anyone wishing contestant or weekend package information for Southeast Drummer should contact The Eagle.

National March on Washington MOW needs medically trained volunteers to staff first aid tents and provide roving medical support on the day of the March and at the direct actions the day after the March. Every kind of medically trained personnel, including doctors, nurses, LPNs, RTs, EMTs, MTs, CNAs, and nursing students are needed. Over 4,000 people will be needed before the weekend is through. Volunteers are asked for two hours of their time. Over 1 million people are expected to attend the March, possibly blocking the fastest routes to local emergency rooms, so it's necessary to be prepared to treat any medical emergency which may arise on the scene. Volunteers may contact Kelly McHugh at the March office on Tuesday or Thursday mornings from 8:30 to 11:00 at 1-800-832-2889 or at (202) 628-0444. Please help out with this critical need.

First MCC Church A special congregational meeting will be held Sunday, March 21, at 2PM to decide whether to purchase the McDonald's building at North Druid Hills and Tullie Circle. No other business will be transacted.

An architect has been retained and various inspections are being made to estimate costs of renovation. As much information that can be attained will be presented prior to the vote.

All members are encouraged to attend this extremely important meeting in the life of First MCC.

Taxes Prepared Free for PWAs The Internal Revenue Service is sponsoring a program that prepares Tax Returns free for those who are HIV+. If you would like free assistance in preparing your taxes, please contact Jamey Rousey at the NAPWA (National Association of People With AIDS/Atlanta) offices at (404) 874-7926.

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by David Mott

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OUTLINES

KARA DYRACK

Age: 25

Relationship status: 11 months

How long in Atlanta: 2 years

Last book read: "Tar Baby" by Toni Morrison

Pet peeve: Cruelty to animals

For a self-described "nerd from Brooklyn," Kara Dyrack seems to be pretty cool...at least cool-headed.

"I think of myself as an easy-going person," she says, her voice only betraying a bit of a New York accent. "There are not too many things in life worth boiling your blood about. But, when they come up, you should do something about it."

For example, she says car wrecks aren't worth getting upset over unless someone is hurt.

"Things related to people get me upset more than material things," she says.

Kara is recovering from a cold on the night of this interview, so for the health of both interviewer and interviewee, Kara recounts her life over the phone.

Indeed, her easy-going style is apparent, as well as her curiosity about her inquisitor, asking after the interview, "Is it my turn to ask questions?"

The penchant for knowledge is great in Kara's case. She has a Master's Degree in Engineering and works for a well-known local company. Ask her why she decided to be an engineer and you get an interesting response.

"I applied to a variety of schools with different goals in mind," she begins. "In one case, I was going to be a women's studies major, in another I was going to major in foreign affairs language and in the rest of them, I was going to be an engineering major. Depending on which school I got into, that was going to be my choice in life. Any which way the cards would have fallen I would have been fine."

Sounds very karmic for a woman who claims not to be very spiritual. But really, she says, "I had so many interests, I would have been fine doing any of them."

Following graduation from the University of Virginia, she accepted a job offer in Atlanta and has been getting involved in the local community. She spent time helping out on the AIDS Hotline for Women until work overtook her free time. She still finds time to run the Cheshire Bridge distribution route for SoVo, and hopes to do more in the future.

"I would like to get more active, not just within the community," Kara notes, "I'd like to do some work with the elderly and animal resource groups."

Speaking of animals, the love of her life for the past two years is a female Abyssinian cat named Earl, who adopted Kara when she lived in Virginia.

"She's much too portly for her own good," Kara laughs. "Her breed is slender, but she just loves food. She's living with a dog right now, and she always has her face in the dog dish. She loves tortilla chips, too!" Time to get the kitty cholesterol checked, Kara.

As for the future of Kara Dyrack, she says she hasn't thought too far ahead.

"I don't see myself living here forever," she remarks. "I want to get out to the west coast at some point. I have friends out there, and the lifestyle is really attractive. It seems more relaxed and down to earth than the east coast. And it's warm, that's key."

But as for really long term goals, don't ask. "I'm one of those people who lives week to week or month to month. Let's just see what happens."

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ORGANIZATIONS

AIDS Organizations

AID Atlanta— 872-0600
AIDS Education/Services for Minorities—POB 87277, Atlanta, 30337, 762-6002
AIDS Hotline for Women—888-9991
AIDS Info Line—876-9944 (Atlanta); 1-800-551-2728
AIDS Legal Project—688-5433
AIDS Outreach Sewing Guild—872-2246
AIDS Research Consortium of Atlanta (ARCA)—876-2317
AIDSCHAIM—Edie, 642-3467
Atlanta Buyers Club— (404) 874-4845, or POB 77003, Atl, 30357.
Childkind—936-9655
First MCC AIDS Ministry—872-2246
Georgia AIDS Therapy Information Network—1-800-551-2728
The Living AIDS Memorial Park Project—633-0634
National Assn of People With AIDS/Atlanta— 874-7926
The Names Project/Atlanta—605-7386
Outreach, Inc.—(404) 346-3922
People's United Pet Support—370-0178
Pets Are Loving Support (P.A.L.S.)—876-PALS
Positive Outlook On Health—872-9954
Project Open Hand Atlanta—525-4620

Arts/Entertainment

Atlanta Feminist Women's Chorus—872-4432
Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus—POB 771144, Atlanta 30357
"Funny...That Way"—875-2275
Southeastern Arts, Media & Education Project, Inc —609-9590
Southern Country Atlanta—938-0609

Bars

The Armory—836 Juniper. 881-9280
Backstreet—845 Peachtree St. 873-1986
Blake's—227 10th St. 892-5786
Buddies Cheshire Square—2345 Cheshire Br. Rd. 634-5895
Buddies Midtown—239 Ponce de Leon. 872-2655
Bulldog & Co—893 Peachtree. 872-3025
Burkhart's—Ansley Square. 872-4403
Club Fetish—(Weds.) 695 North Ave.–577-8178
The Cove—586 Worchester. 875-2477
Crazy Ray'z—1492 Piedmont. 873-4655
The Eagle—308 Ponce De Leon. 87EAGLE
551 Downstairs—551 Ponce De Leon. 873-4052
Gallus Bar & Restaurant—49 6th St. 892-8983
Goodies—64 Third St. 873-3355
The Heretic—2069 Cheshire Bridge. 325-3061
Incognito—857 Collier Rd. 355-5189
Loretta's—708 Spring St. 874-8125
The Metro—48 6th Street, 874-9869
New Order—1544 Piedmont. 874-8247
Opus—1086 Alco St. 634-6478
The Otherside—1924 Piedmont Rd. 875-5238
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Petrus—1150 Peachtree St. 873-6700
Phoenix—567 Ponce De Leon. 892-7871
Scandals—Ansley Square. 875-5957
Tin Lizzie—Ford Factory Square. 874-3961
Visions—2043 Cheshire Bridge. 248-9712
Weekends—688 Spring St. 875-5835

Direct Action/Political

ACLU/Lesbian &Gay Chapter—523-6201
ACT UP—874-6782 (O)
Catalyst—(404) 776-1478
Gay/Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation—605-7477
Gay Republicans—Republicans for Individual Freedoms, 2980 Cobb Pkwy, Suite 192-172, Atlanta 30339
Georgia Advocates for Battered Women and Children/Lesbian Task Force—524-3847; 250 Georgia Ave. SE, Rm. 365 , Atlanta 30312
Georgia Committee for the 1993 March on Washington —(404) 662-4199 or POB 5282, Atlanta 30307
GAPAC–Georgia Political Action Committee—872-8095, FAX 874-8628
Human Rights Campaign Fund—Field Committee, 231-5751
LEGAL—605-7476
Lesbian Avengers—577-5513 (Lisa)
National Association of People with AIDS Hotline —874-7926
National Organization for Women—875-0176
Neighbors Network–257-5550
Queer Nation—605-7396
Republicans for Individual Freedoms—PO 13162, Atlanta, GA 30324, 239-1679
Straight But Not Narrow—242-2256 (voice mail)
STOP Bias Crimes Hot Line—605-STOP

Professional

Bar Owner's Assn—POB 15114, Atlanta 30333-0114
Fourth Tuesday—662-4353
Georgia Assoc. of Physicians for Human Rights (GAPHR)— 231-2251
HomeGirls—622-0105
LEAGUE (Employees of AT&T)—404/872-2359
Nat'l Federaton of Career Women—(404) 659-0315
OUTstaff (Emory)—727-2787 (Donna)

Spiritual

All Saints Metropolitan Community Church —622-1154
Catholic Gay and Lesbian Outreach—409-0203
Christ Covenant MCC, Stone Mountain—297-0350
Congregation Bet Haverim—642-3467
Emergence/Atlanta (Christian Scientists)—215-0585
First Metropolitan Community Church of Atlanta—872-2246
Gay & Lesbian Mormons—570-2561 (dig. page)
Gay Spirit Visions—378-7224
Integrity (Episcopal)—642-3183
Lutherans Concerned/Atlanta—636-7109
Oakhurst Presbyterian Church—378-6284
Presbyterians for Lesbian and Gay Concerns—373-5830
Unitarian Universalists—634-5134, George at 688-2242

Sports/Outdoor/Hobbies

Atlanta Team Tennis Assn—621-2699
Atlanta Venture Sports—242-4899
Atlanta Women's Social Tennis—662-GAME
Front Runners/Atlanta—621-5007
Greater Atlanta Naturist Group—SASE to: GANG, POB 7546, Atlanta 30357
Hotlanta Soccer—876-7372
Hotlanta Softball League—POB 14582, Atl. 30324, 873-4061
Hotlanta Volleyball—621-5062
Lambda Car Club—POB 11705, Atlanta 30355
Mountain Catalyst—POB 199, Demorest, GA 30535
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Women's Outdoor Network—624-3418
Women's Rugby—659-6916 or 761-8939
TRICKS Bridge Club— 2980 Cobb Pkwy, Suite 192-172, Atlanta 30339
Underwater Escapes—289-0696

Service/Support/Social

About Crossdressing—Janet, 624-3770
African American Lesbian/Gay Alliance —239-8184 (voice mail)
Amazon Salon Young Feminist Network—223-3718
American Educational Gender Info Service —POB 33724, Decatur 30033. (404) 939-0244 (eve)
Asians & Friends-Atlanta—876-0090
Athens Lesbian Information Line—(404) 613-7661
Atlanta Area Bisexual Support Group—872-6720
Atlanta Corporal Punishment Club—Box 11863, Atlanta 30355
Atlanta Couples Together—365-2455
Atlanta Gay Center—876-5372
Atlanta Lambda Community Center—POB 15180, Atlanta 30333. 662-9010
Atlanta Lesbian and Gay Pride Comm—662-4533
Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance—POB 5502, Atlanta 30307, phone 378-9769
Atlanta Lesbian Singles Organization (ALSO)—843-4492
Atlanta Pro-Choice Action Committee—239-8016
Black and White Men Together—892-BWMT
Caregivers to PWAs Support Group—874-1109 or 875-6109
Coalition of African Descent—681-4868
Codependents Anonymous—239-1657
Chrysalis Women's Center—881-6300
Delphi—POB 14591, Atlanta, G 30324
Emotions Anonymous—872-0979
First Women—Write G.G. Richardson, POB 724711, Atl. 30339, phone 612-9473.
Friends Atlanta—662-4501
Gay Fathers of Atlanta—296-8369
Gay Help Line—6pm-11pm 892-0661
Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Veterans of America—623-4099
Gay/Lesbian Task Force to the Public Safety Comm. of City Council—330-6504
Georgia Girth & Mirth—POx 9678. Atlanta 30319. (404) 621-5710
Georgia Lesbian Ecofeminists—525-9085
Gwinnett Lambda—POB 464848, Lawrenceville 30246, 871-GAYS
Hospitality Atlanta—627-0520
Interact of Atlanta—984-9875
KO-Existance—875-8936
Lambda Group/Narcotics Anonymous—237-6262
Leather S/M Discussion Group—873-2453
Lesbian Alcoholics Anonymous—325-4909
Lesbian Support Group—627-7387
Lesbians Over 50— 850-1005
Lesbians With Children—740-1729
Men of Little 5 Points—POB 5425, Atlanta 30307
Name the Violence Support Group for Battered Lesbians—822-9570; Crisis Hotline—688-9436
Out Youth—POB 78401, Atlanta 30357, 239-9286 (no calls after 10pm)
Overeaters Anonymous (gay/lesbian group)—892-5868
Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays—296-0830 or 875-9440
Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays/Athens—(706) 208-1704
Queer Youth—P.O. Box 54032, Atlanta 30308; 605-7396
Sexual Compulsives Anonymous—239-8048
Single Lesbians Group—466-3287
Support Group for Battered Gay Partners—(404) 873-9832 (staff counselor)
Uniformed Svcs Activity—Box 6057, Arlington, VA 22206
Women In Kahoots—(WINK) 438-1421
Women of Wisdom—289-8819, POB 8871, Atlanta 30306.
Wordsmith Society—Chris at 498-0137
Young Adult Support Group—876-5372
Zami—908-3356

Students/Alumni

Agnes Scott Lesbian & Bisexual Alliance—Box 501, Decatur 30030; 373-1632
Bi, Lesbian & Gay Student Union of West Ga. College —706-834-3569
Emory Lesbian & Gay Organization—727-6692
Gays & Lesbians United for Equality—Kennesaw Comm. College 426-8160
Georgia Tech Gay Alumni Group—POB 50291, GA Tech Sta., Atlanta 30332; 873-2263
Georgia Tech Gay & Lesbian Alliance—497-0684
Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Student Union of the Univ. of Ga.—POB 2438 Athens 30612-0438 or call 404/549-9368
S.E. Alternative Lifestyles Association—248-9307
Univ. of Ala. Lesbian/Gay Alumni Assoc.—284-3479

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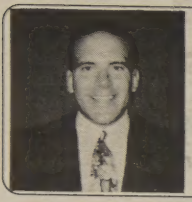

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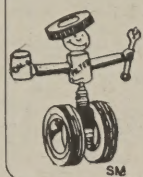

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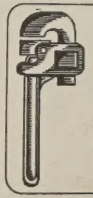

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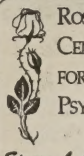

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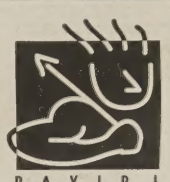

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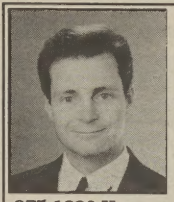

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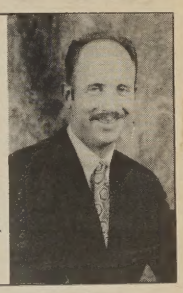

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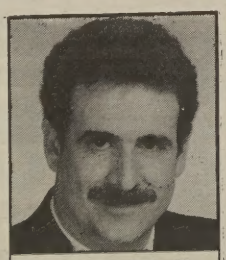

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AIDS Services & Education

Heartstrings of West Georgia–an AIDS education and support org. We help meet the needs of those affected by HIV/AIDS and increase public awareness. For free monthly newsletter, call 214-AIDS or write "Heart to Heart," PO Box 633, Carrollton, GA 30117.

P.A.L.S. Pets Are Loving Support – Providing P.W.A.s with information on obtaining canine and feline companions, free pet food and reduced vet care. **WE NEED YOUR HELP!** Donations for pet supplies and food. Transportation of food and pets. Foster homes. Donate. Volunteer. 876-7257. Leave message.

AID Atlanta: the Southeast's largest non-profit AIDS service agency. Services include education, case management, transportation, housing, buddy program, practical support, homeless services, pediatric services, support groups, AIDS Information Line. Call 872-0600 for more information.

Want to meet new friends and have community? Enjoy new activities? Join the day program at Common Ground for people living with HIV/AIDS. Mon–Fri, 10:30-3:30. **Call 874-6425** for information. Atlanta Interfaith AIDS Network.

Tuesday Night at The Shrine – A weekly dinner open to ALL individuals with HIV. Tuesday at 6pm. Come and have some **fun, laughs and great food.** The Shrine is located at 48 MLK Jr. Dr., Atlanta on the corner of Central Ave. **FREE.** For information call Alan Dillmann, 521-1866.

HIV/AIDS SUPPORT GROUPS IN CARROLLTON You don't have to deal with HIV/AIDS alone. All groups are held weekly– confidential and free of charge. **PWA/HIV Support Group,** call 214-8054. **Friends & Family of PWA/HIV,** call Bobbie Jacobs at 214-8777. **AIDS Bereavement Group,** call Pick Conner at 836-6505 (days) or 834-8195 (eve).

AIDS HOTLINE FOR WOMEN– 888-9991 – new project of the Feminist Women's Health Ctr. Learn how HIV is transmitted, testing locations, how to clean your "works," how to use condoms, dental dams or anything about HIV and AIDS. Trained phone counselors 5:30-9:30pm Mon-Fri, 10:30am-2pm Saturdays. Caller anonymity assured. To volunteer call Tonia at 874-7551.

SPIRITUAL HEALING CLINIC for HIV/PWA, caregivers, loved ones. First Tues. evening of each month. Facilitators trained & certified. Based on Brazilian spiritual healing clinics. For reservations & info call 634-9693 or 256-9144.

Jerusalem House houses up to 23 homeless PWAs. Our facility has expanded & needs help to furnish the new rooms. Individual / corporate donations needed / accepted. Send checks / pledges to Jerusalem House, Furnishings Prog, 100 Edgewood Ave, NE, Ste. 1002, Atl., GA 30303 or call 527-7627 for info.

HIV+ Narcotics Anonymous (NA) for African Am. Wed. eve., transportation avail; Family support group for loved ones of HIV+ African Am.; "Latex Lovers" sex-pos. HIV prevention prog. for GBM (need volunteers also); FREE ANONYMOUS HIV TESTS, counselling, referral (minority cultural sensitivity) begins mid Feb. For confidential info call OUTREACH, INC. 346-3922.

AIDSCHAIM: Congregation Bet Haverim sponsors a support group for those affected by the AIDS crisis. Meets the 1st & 3rd Thurs. at 7:30pm, Friends Meeting House, 701 W. Howard St., Decatur. Info/Directions? Edie, 642-3467.

P.O.O.H. – Positive Outlook On Health is a supportive network of HIV+ persons who share positive health attitudes and want to meet similarly oriented people for social and emotional interaction. Call 872-9954.

THE ATLANTA BUYERS CLUB– ABC provides access to optional treatments for the HIV community in the Southeast. Hours are 12-5 PM, Tuesday through Friday. We are located at 44 Twelfth St., NE, with parking in the rear. For more information phone (404) 874-4845, fax (404) 874-9320, or write P.O. Box 77003, Atlanta, GA 30357-7003.

Atlanta Gay Center —Plus groups for HIV-affected people. Fridays, 8:00pm and Sundays, 6:00pm. 63 12th Street. Call 876-5372 for more info. Helpline, 892-0661, for info, counseling and referral. 6:00-11:00pm 365 days a year.

ACT UP/Atlanta: 874-6782 (office & 24hr. voice mail)

AIDS Information Line / GA Toll-Free AIDS Hotline Free, anonymous information and referral services. In Atlanta: 876-9944; Toll-free: 1-800-551-2728 (voice/TTY)

Announcements

Call for art—focus on goddess/solstice for May/June show. Send color photo/slides to First Existentialist Congregation, 470 Candler Park Dr., NE, Atlanta 30307. (6.5)

Women's soccer team seeks goalie, co-coach and experienced players. Interested? Call Jenny at 373-4322 for details. (6.4)

Celebrating Gay Spirit Visions. Gay men seeking to explore and celebrate alternative spiritual expressions are invited to join our ongoing, diverse group. Meetings monthly on the 2nd Saturday, 10 AM-2PM. Call Martin 378-7224. (6.14)

For All Men! Atlanta Men's Center open support group for men. Every Tuesday from 7pm to 9pm across from 12-Step Bookstore. Call 888-9811. (6.5)

IRIS

Accepting for Spring issue. Short stories, poetry, art and photography. Send SASE to PO Box 7263, Atlanta, GA 30357. (6.5)

Therapy Group Forming for Gays & Lesbians – one in Gwinnett County, the other in Stone Mountain. For more information, call Janice Canon, LCSW 299-2813. (6.4)

Wilderness Network of Georgia: Outdoor adventure group for gay men: hiking, camping, backpacking, canoeing, outdoor activities, weekend trips. Send self addressed stamped envelope to PO Box 55156, Atlanta, GA 30308. (6.7)

The entertainment committee of Atlanta Lesbian & Gay Pride is looking for artists and performers for the 1993 Pride Festival. Singers, dancers, poets, musicians, etc. submit your name to the committee by either calling the Pride Line at 662-4533 or contact the entertainment chairman (Chris Hatcher) at 424-4756. Pride Festival June 1-27, culminating June 26-27. This year expects to draw over 100,000 people. (6.3)

The Lesbian/Gay Chapter of the ACLU welcomes new members for volunteer positions, board membership, and other activities. We meet on the fourth Wed. of each month. Contact us at 233 Mitchell St., SW, Suite 200, Atlanta, GA 30303 or leave a message at 523-5398. (6.3)

Interested in leasing housing to lesbian/gay travelers for special events? (1994 Superbowl, 1996 Olympics) For information, send SASE with name, address, phone, to R.T., PO Box 17535, Atlanta, GA 30316 (6.8)

Employment

PART TIME

DELIVERY DRIVER

Flexible hrs, creative pay. Must have reliable transportation. Please call Tim or Dena at Maddix Deluxe, 892-9337, for appt. Maddix Deluxe, 1034 N. Highland. (6.4)

GABE'S–THE LODGE

is hiring waiters experienced in fine dining. Apply in person at 936 Canton St./Roswell between 3-6PM or call 993-7588 for interview. (6.5)

FULL TIME

AT&% Authorized Security dealer needs clear speaking voices & great attitude to set appointments for home security sales. Day & evening shifts. Salary plus bonus. Call Debbie 455-1009. (6.3)

EDITOR

Southern Voice, the South's leading gay and lesbian newspaper, seeks a highly qualified and creative individual to serve as editor. Writing, editing, design and lay-out experience required. Working knowledge of PageMaker and Microsoft Word a must. Journalism degree a plus. Send resume and clippings to: Christina Cash, PO Box 18215, Atlanta, GA 30316. No phone calls, please. (6.4)

Office Manager Administrative Assistant for AFSC, Quaker Peace and Social Justice Organization, located in Atlanta. Provide administrative support for Regional office. Requires typing, Word Perfect 5.1, good verbal and written expression, detail work, telephone skills. Affirmative action policy for women, third-world, sexual minorities, and differently abled. For application package, call 404-586-0460. (6.3)

Female quadriplegic, ventilator user, late 30's, needs roommate/helpmate. I live in Southwest Atlanta and need a driver/personal care assistant. Some time off each day and one weekend per month. MUST HAVE EXCELLENT CHARACTER. Medical background helpful but not essential. Salary–up to $28,000 for the right person. Write letter of interest to Creative Pathways, Inc., 4247 Parkview Court, Stone Mountain, GA 30083. (6.5)

Health

FITNESS

Dedicated workout partner needed with Sportslife Club Cobb member. Serious replies only, platonic please. Shift worker w/flexible hours, intermediate ability. 873-3819 x6579. (6.6)

PERSONAL GROWTH

Group forming for partners of survivors of sexual abuse. Professionally led. For more information, call Connie Tuttle, M.Div. 377-6659. (6.6)

10 week relationship enrichment group for lesbian couples. Communication problem solving/intimacy. For more information call Connie Tuttle, M.Div. 377-6659. (6.6)

Counseling – Athens Community. Individual, couples, & group therapy. Jan Price, MSW (706) 353-2036. Flex hours, sliding scale, confidential. (6.3)

Merchandise

RETAIL

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for fund raisers. Poly bagged. Amazing Productions - Chicago. Fax 312-334-1020, Tel 312-334-1018. (6.7 exp5)

Wear your colors with Pride. Beautiful hand crocheted scarves. Great gifts. $15.00. Betty, digital beeper, 533-1706. (6.7)

Real Estate

FOR RENT

Virginia-Highland / Morningside–Unique 2 BR, 2 1/2 BA, garage, 2 decks. All ammenities. $1400/mo. Sm pet. 876-4932. (6.6)

Lake Claire. Furnished efficiency apt. in house basement. $395/mo. + deposit, util. included. Non-smoking. Suitable for single male. 373-2126. (6.4)

Attention Sisters. St. Petersburg, Fla. Gulf beach house March 14-22. $600 + $100 deposit. Sleeps 6 adult non-smokers. (813) 837-5772. (6.3)

1 BR apt–GRANT PARK. Private, one block from deli, laundry. Must be quiet, considerate, responsible non-smoker. $435 + utilities. 622-9797 10am-10pm. (6.3)

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In Person: Bring completed order form with payment to Southern Voice offices (M-F, 9-5pm) 1189 Virginia Ave. NE.

By Mail: Mail completed order form with payment to SOUTHERN VOICE CLASSIFIEDS P.O. Box 18215, Atlanta, GA 30316.

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After 4 issues:	
20 words	$11.00 minimum
each additional word	$1.00

COMPUTE YOUR COST

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Giant headline @ 3.00 _____
SUBTOTAL _____
x ____ # issues
TOTAL COST _____

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	4 weeks
20 words	FREE
Telephone VOICEbox	FREE
each additional word	50¢
Giant headlines	$3.00
SV forwarding mailbox (optional)	10.00
Other P.O. Box	5.00

COMPUTE YOUR COST

20 words FREE
Telephone VOICEbox FREE
____ # add. words @ 50¢ ea/wk _____
Giant headline @ 3.00/week _____
Forwarding box @ 10.00/week _____
Other P.O. Box @ 5.00/week _____
SUBTOTAL _____
(4 weeks minimum) x ____ # weeks
TOTAL COST _____

Category _____ # of issues _____

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Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

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FOR SALE

Intown – NEW HOMES! – Walk to restaurants & entertainment of Va-Highlands, Atkins Park, Little 5-Pts! 3 BR, 2.5 BA, 9' ceilings, hdwd floors, 2-car garages, much more, from $169,900. BLUE RIDGE PLACE, off N. Highland, 1 blk south of Ponce. OPEN SAT. & SUN. AFTERNOONS! Marnie & Bill McMurry, 577-6232, Remax Intown. (6.3)

Roommates

Seeking 2 roommates to share 3 BR, 1 1/2 BA house off Briarcliff. Private, deck, W/D, fenced back yard. $350/mo. includes util. 633-3048, leave message. Serious calls only. (6.6)

Morrow/Southlake area – seeks GM/F to share 4 bedroom house in quiet neighborhood. $300/mo. 961-2773. (6.6)

GRANT PARK – GM to share spacious home w/2, private entrance, furnished, W/D. $300/mo. includes util. except phone. 622-0384. (6.4)

GWM, non-smoker seeks same to share 2 BR, 2 BA luxury condo in Morningside area. $400 plus 1/2 utilities. Call 633-4721. (6.3)

Lesbian housemate wanted. Short-term: 3/1 thru 7/1/93. Bedroom, study, private bathroom, cable and air conditioner. Must like animals. $385 includes everything. Susan 299-7881. (6.4)

Decatur/Emory: roommate wanted for 3 BR townhouse. $250 + 1/4 util. Private BR & BA. Townhouse has fplc, den, patio, pool. 370-1388. (6.4)

Professional GWM, straight acting, looking for same to share 3 BR, 2 BA home close to 75 and 285. $300 + 1/2 utilities. No smokers, drugs, fems. 565-4475, Mike. (6.4)

EMORY – G/BiF, responsible, non-smoker to share large 4 BR house with professional female. Excellent location! Yard, W/D, lots of space. $375 + 1/2 util. 633-7486. (6.3)

Services

Sewing in my home. Women, men, costumes & home interiors. IN-Stitches. Call 875-7156. (6.3)

Travel

Attention Sisters. St. Petersburg, Fla. Gulf beach house March 14-22. $600 + $100 deposit. Sleeps 6 adult non-smokers. (813) 837-5772. (6.3)

Intown Atlanta – A gay-hosted B&B suite in restored Victorian Inman Park. All amenities incl. kitchen. Secured Parking. $70.00 or extended rates. 523-5804. (6.5)

BED & BREAKFAST

Washington, D.C. Gay-owned Bed & Breakfast. In quiet townhouse. Near tourist attractions, gay bars. $49. Call Luke at 202-387-1921. (6.3)

Volunteers

PRIDE WEEK '93

Show your pride and have some fun by helping to plan and stage PrideWeek '93, Atlanta's annual lesbian and gay pride celebration. Volunteers are needed for all aspects of the events, including fundraising, park set-up, and merchandising. To volunteer, attend the next general meeting of the ALGPC, Thursday, March 18, 7:00pm, at the Sheraton Colony Square Hotel; (Piedmont & 14th Streets, Midtown) or, call the PrideLine at 404-662-4533. Get involved and help make PrideWeek '93 the best ever! "It's Time to Tell America!" (chk 6.4)

Atlanta Gay and Lesbian Arts Festival needs volunteers to help organize, fundraise and promote AGALAF '93. We meet on the 3rd Tuesday of every month, 7pm at Common Ground (corner of 11th St. and Juniper). Call 404-874-8710. (6.6)

DO YOU SPEAK SPANISH AND WANT TO VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME TO WORK WITH THE ELDERLY? The DeKalb Community Council on Aging is looking for volunteers to assist the Spanish-speaking elderly. If you have a few hours each month, please call Debbie Bowling at 284-4865, or at 370-4081. (6.5)

AID Atlanta is recruiting volunteers to become facilitators for SAFE SEX Parties in the gay community. These parties are lots of fun. Also volunteers to conduct safer sex/risk reduction workshops. Call Pat Grindel for information —872-0600. Volunteers needed in various areas of AIDS service and education. Training provided. Call AID Atlanta, 872-0600.

PROJECT OPEN HAND needs volunteers to prepare and/or deliver meals to PWAs Monday through Saturday. A few hours a month can make a lot of difference. Contact Ken, Cleve or Tonia at 525-4620.

Voice Connection

WOMEN

Single Black Female seeks same for friendship and other possibilities. ☎ 1324

Attractive BF couple with children seeking female couples for friendship. Interests incl. park, movies, playing cards & social gatherings. Box 1404, 1189 Virginia Ave, NE, Atlanta, GA 30306. (6.6)

GWF – attractive professional, MA, approx range 35-45, 5'5", enjoys nature walks, theater, movies, books, travel, "nesting," quiet but gregarious. Box 1402, 1189 Virginia Ave, NE, Atlanta, GA 30306. (6.6)

GWF, feminine, 31, seeking a feminine, emotionally stable, humorous, affectionate, thoughtful, drug-free, intelligent woman. Is this a hopeless search? ☎ 1322

Two staight acting GWM European lovers seeking two GF (lovers). Looking for marriage of mutual convenience. Age not important. Box 1401, 1189 Virginia Ave, NE, Atlanta, GA 30306. (6.6)

Un-categorical GWF, 40s. Shy, dry humored, non-smoker/drinker. Writing, theater, film, health, nature. Star gazer not bar blazer mentality. No role players, games. P.O. Box 93352, Atlanta, GA 30377. (6.4)

GWF, attractive, slim, 40, feminine, non-smoker, self-supporting, seeks: butchish GWF to lead in country dancing, friendship, hopefully more. ☎ 1308

"WHERE ARE YOU?"

GWF, fem, lipstick lesbian, pretty, 30's, looking for someone special to date. I love art, music, guitars, dancing, poetry, theatre, travel, romance, hugs, candlelight dinners, positive people, motivation. Do not want: drugs, negative people, one night stands, games, butch women, men. Show me an ad can work by replying! I know you're out there, we just haven't met yet! ☎ 1310

GBF—25 tender years is an assertive, progressive and extremely conscious college student who prefers a self-assured understanding feminine woman. ☎ 1259

Zesty tall XLarge 35WF artistic w/ hangups likes gabbing cinema tunes games emotions lonely for WF admirer 30-50 size who cares ☎ 1256

Attractive GBF (a little tomboyish at times), seeks aggressive yet beautiful, articulate and intelligent counterpart. 22-32 for friendship or more. ☎ 1253

Lonely GBF, 35, attractive, professional, seeks attractive, feminine woman for one-on-one relationship. No Butch/Bi's. ☎ 1249

Two single GFs looking to expand network of friends. Interests include movies, picnics, etc. Expand your horizons. Call us today. ☎ 1254

GWF, 31, 5'2", 113 lbs, professional, attractive seeks similar GWF for movies, dining, working out, travel & possibly more. ☎ 1247

GBF, 27, new to Atlanta, discreet. Enjoys a night in rather than a night out. Wants a fem for friendship. ☎ 1239

GBF, 5'8", 139 lbs seeks GF who is intelligent and serious about a friendship and possible relationship. ☎ 1231

GWF seeks same age 30-38, intelligent, attractive, good values, emotionally healthy, playful. No drugs or smokers. ☎ 1232

Progressive GWF looking for other progressive women for friendship or possible relationship. ☎ 1235

Attractive, atentive, gregarious, honest, intelligent, intense, off-the-wall, romantic, sensual, late 30's, travelling professional needs affectionate, eclectic, striking, sexually adventurous sophisticate for weekend romantic pursuits. No flakes, druggies or gamers (I don't know the rules!). ☎ 1127

GF seeks that special someone to fill her arms—and warm her nights. Call me, let's get together! ☎ 1124

GWF, romantic, feminine, 32, attractive, intelligent, searching for similar sincere WF who desires honest caring friendship (Atlanta, Macon, Covington). ☎ 1123

WF, 26, 5'11", 140 lbs, br/br, looking for gay/bi female for fun, friendship, and who knows. Femmie, no butches, 21-35. Fit & no drugs. ☎ 1126

Attractive GWF with chronic fatigue syndrome seeking same for walks, picnics, books, friendship & life in the slow lane. ☎ 1113

GWF, 28, professional, well-educated, cultured, refined, feminine, attractive, seeks sophisticated, feminine GWF who possesses good values for friendship / monogamous relationship. We'll share sports, travel, theater, dining. ☎ 1106

Pretty GBF seeks loving counterpart. Should enjoy books, classic jazz, cards, outdoor activities. Should detest drugs, alcohol, Madonna, cigarettes. ☎ 1099

GWF Couple (27, 26) seek other GWF couples for platonic friendships for movies, dinner, going out, etc. Please call ☎ 1094

GWF, 22, responsible, educated, crazy, wide-open, kind-hearted. New to GA. Looking for similar new buddies. P.S. – Having dance withdrawals. ☎ 1102

Lifting weights is not the only thing this GBF has the arms for. Feminine smile and gentle touch needed. ☎ 1097

GBF, Floridian: Quiet, sensitive, cerebral, professional, avid reader, traveler. Into New Age thought. Seeking like-minded sisters for correspondence / friendship. ☎ 1093

Cute, feminine, GWF, 26, educated, motivated, professional, energetic, somewhat wild and wacky, seeks kindred spirits. No drugs or butch. ☎ 1024

GWF, 28, intelligent, feminine, attractive non-smoker who lives near Asheville, North Carolina. Loves outdoors and romance. Seeks girlfriend for friendship, possibly more. ☎ 1018

GWF, femme, 25, w/5yr. old daughter seeks GFs for friendship. The rest is destiny's call. Call me today! ☎ 1026

GWF seeks attractive, romantic lesbian over 30 for relationship. ☎ 1028

GF seeks fun, intelligent, good looking female for friendship, possible relationship. Me: 5'8", 150 lbs and a good catch. ☎ 1075

Youthful GWF, mature BiWF seeking differently pleasured females for role-playing, fantasy. Instructions for beginners. POB 620021, Atlanta, GA 30362. ☎ 1074

30 year old GBF looking for 30 & up GBF. No drugs and no drinking. ☎ 1023

GW Feminine, Latin Lover. Sexy, 5'7", 125lbs – 30 something. Independent, strong. Funny. You—tall blonde feminine – 30 something – opposites attract! ☎ 1029

Fem GWF, 22, into politics as well as old-fashioned romance. Seeking butch for possible relationship. TRAY ☎ 1022

Looking for a fun-loving friend-lover near Asheville, NC. I am feminine, healthy, a little shy, goofy (not looking), 30, and very much alive BIWF. Call me, talk to me, how else will we ever meet? ☎ 1025

Pretty GBF, 25, 5'5", 120 lbs, very affectionate. Seeks gay fem female who's intelligent and serious about a friendship / relationship. ☎ 1013

GBF, 22 looking for GF's between 21 & 30. For friendship and possible relationship. ☎ 1014

MEN

Black hardcore former project boy from NYC, tall, dark, street-wise, no-nonsense seeks absolutely manly, sexy, handsome, dark black soulmate. ☎ 1339

GWM, 55, 6'2", 180, romantic bottom, secure professional, seeks tall slender top. No fems. Age, race unimportant. Box 347147, Atlanta 30334.

WM, 240 lbs, 6'4", masc. Looking for strong minded black male, discreet and into sports. ☎ 1334

Relationship oriented! Enjoy quality times with caring muscular BM, 41, HIV+. You must be a similar GM. No drugs/smoke. ☎ 1336

BM, 30, 170, nice body, attractive, needs a spanking by masculine BM top. ☎ 1337

GBM 24, 6', 215, good-looking, masculine, intelligent, sincere, with varying interests seeks similar in GWM for possible long-term relationship. ☎ 1338

GWM, 40, slim, non-smoker, non-bar, affectionate, humorous, out-doorsey. Seeking a nurturing, monogamous relationship/friend. Enjoy classical music, also simple/country lifestyle. Box 1403, 1189 Virginia Ave, NE, Atlanta, GA 30306. (6.6)

Teddy bear type attractive WM, 5'9", 245 lbs, clean, healthy, happy, seeking masculine, healthy BM (Top) for friendship/possible relationship. ☎ 1340

Black male with feet fetish seeks masculine black male for uninhibited pleasures. ☎ 1341

Friendship is primary for this liberal, professional, 37, GWM who seeks similar GBM to enjoy literature, movies, plays, dinners, etc. ☎ 1342

Fun, attractive, intelligent GWM, 22 into theatre, astrology, and film seeks intelligent, sensual GWM, 20-45 for potential relationship. ☎ 1325

Amatuer wrestler, 6 ft. 185, blonde/blue, 45, good shape, seeks others interested in wrestling, safe fun. ☎ 1326

GWM, 38, 6'2", 200, seeks tall prof. for friendship or more (30-45). Pluses for you might be hairy, uncut, sincere, Fr. A/P, and not into the normal scene! ☎ 1321

GWM, 30, French active seeks good looking slender WM's, 20s. Size unimportant. Cut with no beards please. Fems welcomed. Discreet. ☎ 1320

GWM, handsome, romantic, sincere, sense of humor, caring, gentle and strong. If you appreciate and possess these qualities, let's talk. ☎ 1319

Attractive GWM, 30, 5'5", 132, Brn/brn, hairy, seeking tall, handsome, sincere, non-smoker, GWM for romantic permanent relationship – no barriers. ☎ 1318

Tall, single, slim, dark sexy black male 6ft. 3in., 185 lbs seeks same Bi/GM Top Males 30-45, single, muscular for friendship and more. No fems. ☎ 1323

MUSCULAR, CLEANCUT GWM, grad student, short, lean, dark, hairy, non-smoker, HIV-. Safe, imaginative. Seeking MUSCULAR jocks into showing off, j/o, being worshipped. ☎ 1315

Skyler, give me a call. Chris from Juniper St. ☎ 1314

France • Loire Valley – French boy likes friendship in USA. I love USA and I will love my friends from your lovely country. ☎ 1311

WM, 32, 6'3", 235. My interests: country/rock music, pop culture/Simpsons/Batman, Braves movies, art... Your interests? ☎ 1313

GWM, 40, wishes to meet guys under 25 for fun, friendship, or whatever! ☎ 1316

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GWM, attractive, 40's, oral expert for heavy equipment. Gay/Bi/Str tune-ups given. Best in town. Call soon! ☎ 1317

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GWM, 5'8", 160#, retired senior, healthy, financially responsible, seeks male 25-40 for daytime relationship. ☎ 1307

Couples—Masculine, clean-cut GWM 33 physically fit, healthy, seeks similar 20s & 30s who occasionally enjoy the company of another. ☎ 1260

BM 35, 5'8", 155 lbs, healthy, trim, versatile, well endowed, masculine seeks GM with same qualities. No fems. ☎ 1257

Horny, hairy, hung GWM, 23, 165 lbs. NEEDS a daddy to spank him. "Chris." ☎ 1261

Masc GWM 32 Frech Active seeks horny young MEN, looks unimportant (18-25) Pref smooth, young-looking. Let me worship you. ☎ 1255

Tall, dark, sexy, hairy black male, 28. Seeks honest, sincere, muscled, affectionate Bi/GM Top Man for mutual friendship / more. ☎ 1251

Intelligent GWM seeks same for lunch-time companion or friend. Perimeter mall area, early / mid-afternoon, Monday thru Friday. ☎ 1248.

GWM, 35. TEDDYBEAR, 5'10", 275 lb.+ seeks hunk w/mind, for conversa-

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Horny GWM, 30, 5'4", wants to do helicopter spins on your face! Love hot letters / photos / videos. Call–leave address ☎ 1243

Single woman seeks GM for marriage of mutual convenience. ☎ 1244

Gdlkg GWM, 32, rdsh br./gr., cleanshaven, 5'10 1/2", 189#, healthy, good stocky build, collegiate/professional type, sks collegiate/professional type, 22-42, with ticklish feet for hot tickle sessions. "Bottoms" only. Sane, sensual, safe fun. Live in Birmingham but can travel. ☎ 1241

GWM, 54, 5'10", 165, healthy, mature, romantic, secure professional seeks quality, slender GBM, age unimportant, for friendship, perhaps relationship. ☎ 1242

Adolescent Florida Executive, 6 ft., 170 lbs. Blond. ISO spontaneous, artsy, skimy, young companion for dinner, romance here, sailing, diving, vacations there. ☎ 1240

GBM, 25, sexy, versatile, endowed, seeks brother w/similar qualities and w/ sincere interest in developing friendship into more. No fems. ☎ 1238

WM, 32, 5'10", 155#, F/A, loner type seeks fellow non-fam WM Southerner 30-50 wanting possible one-on-one relationship. ☎ 1237

BM seeks masculine BM to become ? buddies. ☎ 1236

Good looking GWM, 6'1", 190, successful, secure, romantic top seeks relationship oriented cute bottom, 28-38. ☎ 1234

GBM, tall, athletic, professional, discreet, youthful 33, masculine, seeks sexy similar for friendship, fun, mutual enrichment. ☎ 1120

GWM, 32, 5'9", 142 lbs. Professional, handsome, seeks same. ☎ 1125

Responsible, stable, mature, romantic WM – masculine, 40s, professional. Great mentor. Seeks quality friendship with novice / curious WM 18-25. Discretion Assured. ☎ 1115

BM, 30's masculine, endowed, versatile, trim, seeks same in Hispanic or BM. ☎ 1116

Very goodlooking WM, 26, clean cut, muscular, All-American looks, seeks wealthy, generous, supportive WM for mutually beneficial fun. Any age, weight. ☎ 1117

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MB 25, 6', 170 lbs, new to town seeks other males 21-35 for friendship. Interested? Leave msg. ☎ 1112

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Latino GWM, 24, 6', sincere, good personality, seeks secure male for friendship—possible relationship, race unimportant. Healthy, no fems please. ☎ 1108

GWM, 35, 6', 165, versatile, seeks single masculine hairy GWM over 6' for friendship & poss. relationship. No head games. ☎ 1110

Are you out there? GWM, 29, seeks honest, caring GBM (21-40) Prince Charming. I want my happily ever after. ☎ 1111

GWM, 50; seeks younger, mature, masculine, non-smoking GWM/GAM who appreciates the companionship of an older gentleman for possible relationship. ☎ 1103

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WM, 34, attractive, well built, masculine, with strong intellectual curiosity seeks that same combination in someone else, 27-38. ☎ 1107

GWM, 34, 5'8", 160lb., BR/BL. Goodlooking, athletic, muscular. Cultured, well-educated, stable, masculine, romantic, adventurous. Seeks same in mature GWM 30-45. ☎ 1100

Novice GWM Slave Boy, short, cute, lean, muscular, hairy, 35. Seeks light training from Muscular Daddy, GWM, HIV-, smoke/drug free. ☎ 1105

BiWM 6'4" 260lbs, 34, looking for sportsminded BM masc. (TOP) discreet to handle it. ☎ 1091

WM, masculine, 6'3", 185 lbs., 43, HIV-, closeted, seeks only similar, masculine, HIV-, hung, WM for private regular mutual satisfaction. ☎ 1098

GWM, 37, BL/Blue, attractive, intelligent, healthy, passionate, masculine, trim, muscular, hairy, long "married" and horny. Seeks attractive, daytime top buddy. ☎ 1096

GWM, 25, 5'3", 135, br/bl, looking for hot safe times with 35 or younger top. PR, Latino, Oriental preferred. ☎ 1095

GWM, 41, 5'11", 165, BR/BL, romantic, relationship oriented, looking for long term relationship with caring, down-to-earth WM, 26-32. Call ☎ 1080

GWM, 5'8", 160#, healthy, professional, generous, seeks lunch partner and afternoon relaxations. ☎ 1082

GWM, 29, 5'11, 170, BR/BL. Attractive, receding, honest, monogamous. Seeks safe, romantic, fit, smooth WM around same age. Possibly permanent relationship. ☎ 1084

Attractive GWM, 33, with boyish good looks, in great shape, seeks young, handsome, hunky GBM for hot times and friendship. ☎ 1090

GWM, 50; apiarist, aviculturist, herbalist, horticulturist; humble, meek, healthy seeks masculine, aggressive partner to share simple country life (handicapped welcome). ☎ 1089

GWM 38, 170, 6', clean cut daddy type. Work out. Seeks 25-40 for submissive relationship, non-smoker, HIV neg. ☎ 1087

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GWM, 37, 6'2", 200, smooth uncut seeks hairy bearded guy 30-40 for friendship or more. Smoker OK. ☎ 1085

Wrestlers wanted by athletic WM 5'11", 190#. ☎ 1068

GWM, 25, honest, sincere, looking for GWM 28-35 for good times, possible friendship leading to solid relationship. ☎ 1065

GWM, 29, 5'9", 160, Br/Hz. Very masculine, good-looking, muscular, health-conscious, honest, educated, high-achiever, humanitarian, stable, laid-back, casual, playful, out-going, open-minded, with varied interests, seeks same. ☎ 1066

GWM, 26, college student, 6'0", 165 lbs, muscular, clean-cut, looking for wealthy WM for fun and excitement, any age, weight. ☎ 1060

GBM, 5'9" – 196 lbs. seeks top GBM for honest, serious friendship and or relationship. Serious persons please. ☎ 1077

WM, 25, 5'9", 175 lbs., seeks other non-stereotypical WM 18-30 for friendship or more. I live in Chattanooga but travel to Atlanta weekly. All answered. ☎ 1062

GWM, 30, 5'9", BL/BL, 170, looking for my "thirtysomething." Call VOICEbox for addres or leave message. ☎ 1061

GWM, 32, 5'11', 165, HIV neg, short black hair, dark eyed top man needs light hair blued eyed bottom boy. ☎ 1059

GWM, 29, Professional, nice-looking, HIV positive, is interested in meeting similar professional guys for friendship or possible relationship. ☎ 1052

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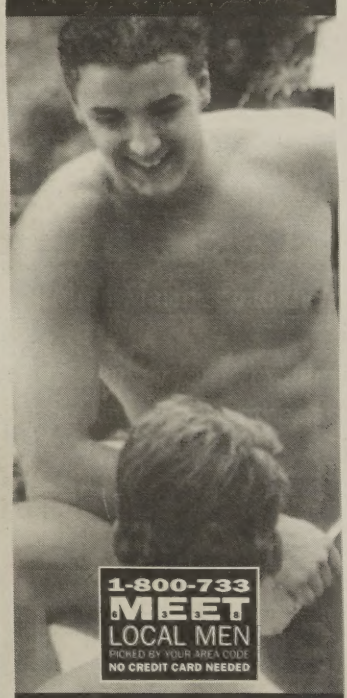
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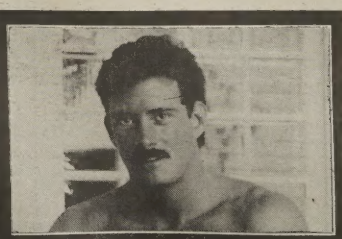
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POLITICAL LEADERS:
Familiar faces tapped to helm Georgia Equality.
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Jungle changes format in nightlife shake-up.
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SO VO
SOUTHERN VOICE

Labor Gay Weekend

DJ VanCronkhite just one headliner on packed calendar for holiday weekend.
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WWW.SOVO.COM AUGUST 31, 2007

BLACK GAY PRIDE 2007

The making of a mecca

Why Atlanta is America's black gay capital

By RYAN LEE
rlee@sovo.com

One of the defining elements of a mecca is its gravitational pull, its propensity to attract far away pilgrims.

Muslims are spiritually bound to visit Saudi Arabia's Mecca if they are able to do so in their lifetime, and the Wailing Wall draws Jewish worshipers to pray 24/7. The energy of fashion meccas like New York and Paris attracts aspiring designers, models, photographers and make-up artists from across the globe.

And during the 1960s and '70s, America's most prominent gay mecca emerged in the Bay Area of California, as thousands of men and women fled their small, closed-minded cities and towns, and trekked across the country hoping to find freedom and justice for all in San Francisco.

The evidence of Atlanta's status as a black gay mecca manifests this weekend as an estimated 60,000 tourists descend on the city for Black Gay Pride, which runs through Labor Day. The strength of the city's pull for black gay men and lesbians will be proven by how many of those 60,000 people don't return to their hometowns.

"When I came I was only supposed to be here for two weeks for vacation," recalled Duncan Teague, who visited a week before Labor Day in 1984, and has

Please see **MECCA** on **Page 10**

Jonathan Plummer

How Jonathan got his groove back

Controversial gay author, Oscar winner Jennifer Hudson highlight Pride entertainment line-up

By RYAN LEE
rlee@sovo.com

Ten years ago, millions of Americans were introduced to a sexy, smooth-talking, 20-something Jamaican named Winston Shakespeare in Terry McMillan's semi-autobiographical novel "How Stella Got Her Groove Back."

In 2005, the world met the real-life inspiration behind Winston, Jonathan Plummer, and realized

Please see **PLUMMER** on **Page 38**

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SOUTHERN VOICE

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MAILBOX

Why no concern over Farmer's Market in Piedmont Park?

To the Editors:

Re "Conservancy raised concerns first about park's Sunday night crowd" (news, Aug. 3):

As I read this article it seems to me that Ms. McCown and Mr. Gower's comments are attempts to spin control a situation that is based on discrimination and racism, regardless of their statements of denial.

For Ms. McCown to hide behind statements like "We were getting, from multiple sources...concerns about what appeared to be some violent behavior and some safety issues" and then that statement is then quantified to one incident that "...allegedly took place near Willy's Mexicana Grill on Piedmont Avenue" screams of discrimination. And for Mr. Gower to forward Chris Nelson's comments that the Sunday crowd "...is probably the most dangerous ongoing situation we have encountered so far" through official MPSA documents support the implication that the MPSA agrees at some level with Mr. Nelson.

I would like to know how many other singular incidents have raised the same kind of concerns? Likewise, the attempts by the APD to move the Sunday crowd "to a larger area of the park so emergency vehicles can enter if necessary" can only be taken as discriminatory because the same attempts are not being made for the Farmer's Market crowd that meets on Saturdays at the same area of the park. It seems to me that the vendor booths of Farmer's Market are more of a hindrance for those emergency vehicles to enter because they cannot be easily moved in case of an emergency.

All the comments, actions, "discussions" by these individuals are based on discrimination and racism! To say/think otherwise is a carefully constructed lie. My recommendation to both Ms. McCown and Mr. Gower is that if they are honestly trying to "...find out why 'this' is happening", then they need to go to the source(s) they have prejudgingly placed their accusations on.

JON GABRIEL ORTIZ
Atlanta

Edwards was misunderstood on 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'

To the Editors

I am writing in response to the article about the HRC/Logo debate ("The great gay debate," news, Aug. 17). Reporter Joshua Lynsen suggests that Sen. John Edwards "stumbled" during the debate when he declared that he would as president "get rid" of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

Lynsen seems to be saying that Edwards does not understand what it would it take to invalidate a provision codified in federal law. Lynsen's analysis misses quite a big point. What Edwards was suggesting — with great passion in fact — was that a president could by demonstrating political courage and expending the right amount of political capital move Congress to get rid of this policy and pass the legislation necessary to allow gay and lesbians in the military to serve openly.

Unlike Hillary Clinton — who has only recently come to recognize the DADT policy as wrong and misguided — Edwards was the only candidate in the debate who expressed the kind of willingness to fight on our behalf as president to get rid of this policy. He dismissed a policy of "blind deference" to the military generals and Joint Chiefs of Staff and expressed that as Commander in Chief, the president has the authority (and the responsibility) to weigh in and do whatever is necessary to change this discriminatory policy.

While I certainly wish Edwards would adopt his wife and daughter's support of marriage equality, I am encouraged by his passion to fight on our behalf. This country is clearly divided on the issue of marriage equality and the majority of Americans are not our side. I believe, however, based on Edwards' willingness to fight for us that he will do whatever he can as president to help us win – despite public and GOP opposition – the federal rights and responsibilities to which we are entitled as hard-working, tax-paying Americans.

ERIC J. STERN
Berkeley, Calif.

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Atlanta AIDS organizations brace for funding cuts

Hundreds could lose case management, mental and dental health services

By ZACK HUDSON
zhudson@sovo.com

An announcement predicting a second round of cuts to Ryan White CARE Act funding for metro Atlanta left activists and leaders within local AIDS service organizations reeling.

The federal Human Resources Services Administration's proposed cuts to the Minority AIDS Initiative budget of the Ryan White program, combined with attempts to reclaim federal money allegedly overpaid to Georgia, could add up to Atlanta losing nearly $1.7 million for 2008 and 2009 budgets.

"We've not experienced this sort of loss in funding before," said Jeff Graham, chair of the public policy committee of the Metropolitan Atlanta HIV Health Services Planning Council, which oversees distribution of Ryan White funds for the 22 counties making up the Atlanta Eligible Metropolitan Area.

Though the effect on individual agencies and service providers remains undetermined, Graham said that budgets for specific client services would take the most profound hits if the proposed MAI cuts are left in the 2008 federal budget.

The Atlanta EMA is also currently weathering a punitive reduction from other sections of its Ryan White allotment following a federal government decision, announced in December, to reclaim money it says it overpaid Georgia government agencies as a result of accounting errors.

Graham said the proposed cuts to the Minority AIDS Initiative would force the local council to remove $740,000 from drug reimbursement funds it pays to local AIDS service organizations.

Graham estimates about 430 people would lose or have reduced access to mental health services following the council's projected $190,000 cut to that service budget. And a $135,000 projected reduction in dental health funds — or about enough to pay a full-time dentist for a year — would result in about 450 fewer available appointments for HIV-positive patients who look to social services for their dental care needs.

LOBBYING UNDERWAY The U.S. Congress will begin voting on budget appropriations in September. Graham said he and a cadre of AIDS activists will lobby Congress — specifically Georgia's federal legislative delegation — until the last minute.

"These cuts will be very real next year if additional dollars are not appropriated by Congress. That's really the important message we need to get out," Graham said.

"Now is the time when people need to contact their members of Congress before they vote," he urged.

The local HIV care council estimates about 38,000 Georgians are living with HIV or AIDS. Of those, the council figures about 26,600 are living within the Atlanta EMA.

MAI funds are used to improve HIV-related health outcomes for racial and ethnic minority communities disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS and reduce HIV-related health disparities. The local HIV services council cites Georgia Department of Human Resources figures that estimate 85 percent of newly diagnosed HIV infections in 2005 were among communities of color.

The most likely alternative treatment venue for people with HIV who depend on social services will be indigent medical care through hospital emergency rooms, Graham said.

"And in Atlanta, that means Grady," he said, referring to the beleaguered Grady Health System, itself scrambling to stay afloat among well-documented financial woes.

Please see **AIDS FUNDING** on **Page 8**

Local AIDS activists including **Jeff Graham** and **Tracy Elliott** will head to Washington, D.C., to lobby congress against proposed cuts to Georgia's AIDS resource funding.

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Georgia Equality names new directors

Organization prepping for new strategy rollout

By ZACK HUDSON
zhudson@sovo.com

Nearing the end of a five-month huddle to scrutinize its mission and focus, Georgia Equality is emerging with three new staff members and a comprehensive strategic plan that the organization's directors plan to unveil in coming weeks.

Georgia Equality tapped Cathy Woolard and Kyle Bailey — two very familiar names within gay political circles — to lead the statewide gay political group as interim executive director and political director respectively.

In June, the organization hired Craig Strain as its development director, a position that coordinates fundraising efforts.

The announcement of the new staff returns Georgia Equality to the political and public spotlight after a hiatus while leaders hammered out the details of their new strategic plan, according to Kathleen Womack, chair of GE's political board.

"We've been doing a lot, but most of it's been behind the scenes," Womack said.

Womack has said one impetus of the regrouping time is a $10,000 Gill Foundation grant the organization received in December. Georgia Equality's boards of directors began meeting in March 2007 to fulfill the grant and prepare the new strategic plan.

The organization must adapt to the current Georgia political climate, which has changed drastically since Georgia Equality was founded during the mid 1990s, Womack explained.

"We had a Democratic majority then. We had lots of friends. And as things have changed, it seems that things are becoming more Republican, and less Democratic," Womack said of the situation the group's lobbyists and political consultants face.

Rethinking the organization's strategies is a move to increase its effectiveness.

"If we're only friends with Democrats, we're very rarely going to get anything done. It sounds very partisan, but that's just the reality of the situation," Womack said.

EXPERIENCED LEADERS Woolard currently works for Georgia Equality as a legislative lobbyist under independent contractor status. She will retain that position during her term as interim executive director of the organization. She will be the first replacement for Chuck Bowen, Georgia Equality's most recent executive director, who departed the organization in September 2006.

Womack praised Woolard's long-term commitment to gay rights causes.

"Cathy's been working on behalf of LGBT issues for at least 25 years, and we've been pleased with her work with us," Womack said.

Woolard became Georgia's first openly gay elected official in 1997, when she won election to the District 6 Atlanta City Council seat. In 2001, Woolard won a citywide election to become Atlanta City Council President, the first woman and the first openly gay person to hold the post.

She stepped down from the president's seat in 2004 to make an unsuccessful bid for a congressional seat that was eventually won by Cynthia McKinney.

Woolard could not be reached for comment by press time.

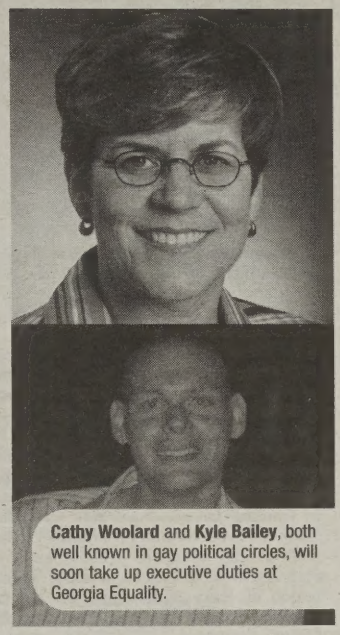
At 24, Kyle Bailey's youth belies his reputation as a swiftly rising star in Georgia Democratic Party politics. Bailey served a term as the chair and public face of the gay Atlanta Stonewall Democrats, and he helped lead the effort to get Jason Cecil, a gay man and Atlanta Stonewall Democrats treasurer, elected as president of the Young Democrats of Georgia.

Bailey worked as community relations director for YouthPride until Aug. 29.

"I think most people are excited to see someone who's both young and smart at the same time about strategy and Georgia politics," Bailey said, adding that he is "excited about the opportunity to work with Georgia Equality."

Strain began his service with Georgia Equality in a volunteer capacity, and was hired to work as the group's development director as an independent contractor.

Final negotiations over employment terms for Bailey and Woolard had not been completed by press time, though Womack confirmed that both Woolard and Bailey had accepted the positions offered by Georgia Equality.



Cathy Woolard and **Kyle Bailey**, both well known in gay political circles, will soon take up executive duties at Georgia Equality.

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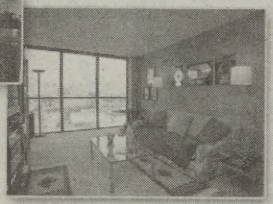

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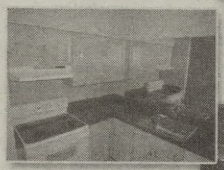

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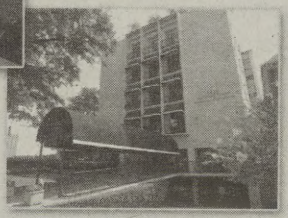

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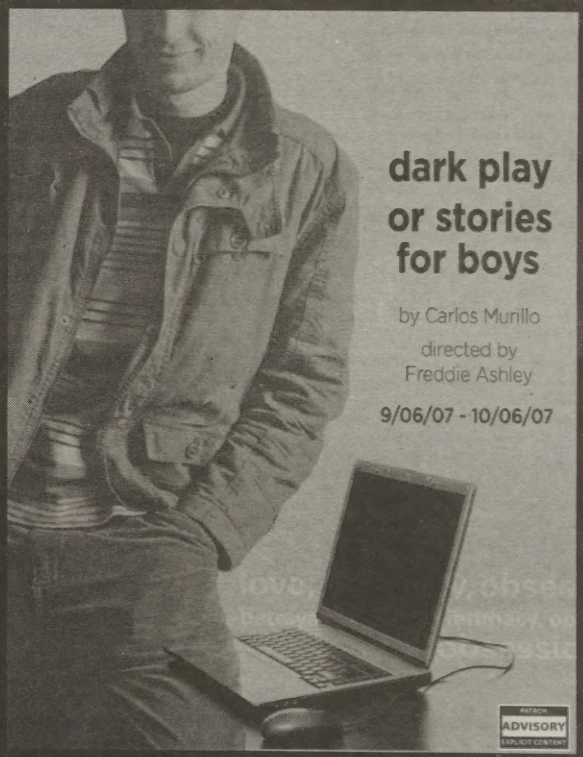
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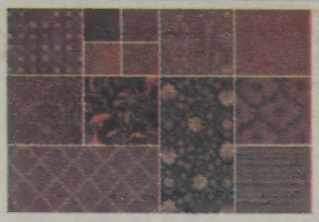

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Local AIDS groups to lobby Congress against funding cuts

AIDS FUNDING, continued from **Page 5**

Tracy Elliott, executive director of AID Atlanta, the largest AIDS service organization in Georgia, said his agency is prepping for any proposed cuts — from Ryan White funds or otherwise — by looking closer at private philanthropy to help make up its budget.

Elliott said that as a result of the proposed MAI cuts, his organization would likely take its biggest cut in case management funds, which he said would have an adverse effect on client services.

"We've known for some time that we would have to look elsewhere — simply for our survival," he said.

Out of an approximately $6 million annual operating budget, just over half of AID Atlanta's cash comes from federal and state grant payments. The organization brought in $1.4 million from its annual AIDS Walk fundraiser in 2006, on top of nearly $600,000 in private donations in 2006.

Elliott will join Graham and other local AIDS advocates on a lobbying trip to Washington, D.C., in September to address the MAI cuts and other issues.

Over at AIDS Survival Project, news of the MAI cuts is troubling, but not devastating, according to executive director Melanie Sovine.

"We're not bracing for that because we do not receive those funds," she said.

AIDS service organizations should prepare for uncertain financial times as a result of government funding because, as Sovine characterized it, the federal government has yet to fully fund HIV social and medical services since the creation of the Ryan White Care Act in 1990.

"The Ryan White Care Act has never — never means never — met the full financial needs of folks who depend on that public resource for care and treatment," she said.

"We're going backwards. It's not as if we've met our goal since 1990, and we're going backward before ever having met the goal," said Sovine, who has worked as a consultant on HRSA issues.

AIDS Survival Project depends on a diversified body of financial resources, according to Sovine. She added that the organization has recently been awarded $175,000 in new grant money.

A $150,000 grant from the Academy for Educational Development will pay for AIDS Survival Project to develop outreach offices in two as-yet-undetermined rural locations. The grant will also contribute to a public awareness campaign that preaches against anti-AIDS and HIV stigma.

Additionally, Sovine said that AIDS Survival Project was awarded a $50,000 grant from the Elton John AIDS Foundation — a full 100 percent increase over the last grant AIDS Survival Project received from the foundation.

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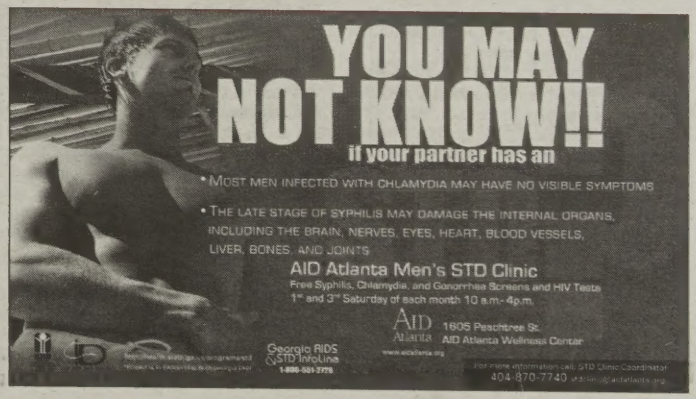

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ATL draws black gays from across the country

MECCA, continued from **Page 1**

called Atlanta home ever since.

Teague remembers attending his first black gay picnic that Labor Day weekend, then discovering that similar parties were taking place all over the city. He was awestruck by the performers and the size of the crowd inside the first gay club he visited.

"I thought, this must be all the black gay people in Atlanta, but lo and behold there was a line out the door and down Peachtree Street," Teague said. "All of these intelligent, sharp, middle class and above black gay men, and it was pretty amazing.

"Since the late '60s, Labor Day weekend, the place to come for that has been Atlanta," Teague added. "Now we host this great big celebration in Atlanta and that's not an accident."

Atlanta's black gay culture is so abundant that it spills over into every part of the city, from popular hangouts like Lenox Square mall, to Black Gay Pride being discussed and publicized on the city's No. 1 urban radio station.

"That's almost unheard of in other cities for Black Gay Pride to get a spot on a major radio station like V-103," said D'Lovely Gibson, who has lived here since 1994 and is a board member of In The Life Atlanta, the organizer of Black Gay Pride.

"When you see the number of people that come into this city for Black Gay Pride and how far and wide they're coming from, and when people go that far for a Pride in the a city, that really says a lot," she said.

NUMBERS & NIGHTLIFE

There are no concrete estimates about the number of black gay men, lesbians and transgender individuals live in metro Atlanta, but even city officials are fully aware of its reputation as a black gay mecca.

"We know that's one of the ways we're identified as a great vacation destination and for relocation," said Lauren Jarrell, director of communications for the Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau. "While we don't have any data to support being a black gay mecca, we do know we're the No. 1 city for African-American travelers, and a popular destination for gay travelers as well."

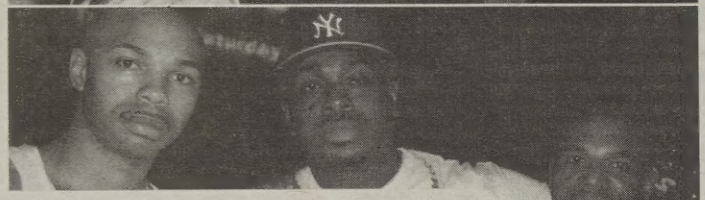
Once those tourists arrive in town, no one can show them a party — more accurately, parties — like the ATL.

"If you visit Atlanta and don't have a good time you don't know what you're doing — that's across the board, but especially for black folks," Teague said.

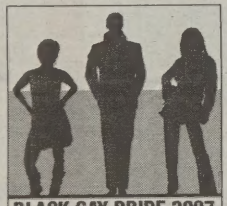
This weekend, out-of-towners are likely to encounter breathtaking expanses of black gay revelers at nightclubs like Traxx, Club Europe and Tower II. The buffet of parties Atlanta offers over holiday weekends like Labor Day and Martin Luther King's birthday is just a sampling of what the city offers year round.

"There is definitely something to do every night of the week," said Donte Smith, who begins rattling off the weekly line-up with ease: the Monday night show at Jungle, Thugged Out Tuesday at Traxx, the mini balls at Club 708 on Wednesdays, and so on.

An Augusta native, Smith "knew Atlanta was an excellent party area" when he moved here after leaving the military, but said he's discovered much more.



Abundant nightlife and social opportunities, like Tuesday night's packed house at Traxx, are among the factors drawing black lesbians and gay men to Atlanta. (Photos by Bo Shell)



BLACK GAY PRIDE 2007
Events calendar, Page 39

"Atlanta offers us a lot of opportunities that we typically won't find elsewhere," Smith said. "It gives us a lot of areas to just develop and grow, particularly with our own businesses."

Still, for decades Atlanta's black gay nightlife has been what separates it from other cities.

"In the mid-'80s, we had a whole lot of black gay nightclubs and some were run by black folks, which is unique," Teague said. "What people experienced in their hometown was going to the white club on the black night, but here black night is every night of the week."

Atlanta native Shonia Brown came out as lesbian about 15 years ago, and in that time she's seen her hometown Pride evolve beyond the nightlife into what's touted as the largest Black Gay Pride in the country.

"There's been a lot of change, and a lot of things offered to young African Americans today weren't necessarily around when I was younger," said Brown, a local author and founder of Nghosi Books. "When the Black Gay Pride celebration first started, it was more of a party, barbecues, picnics, clubs — things like that. But now it's an official, organized event where we can have workshops, along with different entertainment events like spoken-word poetry and book signings."

MECCA OF OPPORTUNITY

Mario Harris is up front about what made him relocate from Milwaukee, Wis., to Atlanta six years ago this Labor Day weekend.

"It's always been a thing of boys, boys, boys," Harris said with a hearty laugh. "When I came for Pride six years ago it was the first time I ever came — and I stayed. I was pretty much like, 'Oh my god, I love this and I'm not going anywhere.'"

Not only did Harris dread returning to Milwaukee's non-existent gay nightlife, but he didn't go back to a city where being a successful black man meant being a postman or punching the clock at a factory job. Within a year of settling in Atlanta, Harris launched his own marketing and party promotions company — WassupnATL — and has since rubbed elbows with black restaurant owners, leaders of Fortune 500 companies like Coca-Cola and the popular playwright Tyler Perry.

Harris also has many friends who sold their homes in Los Angeles, New York and Chicago in order to live more affordably and abundantly in Atlanta.

"It's a huge step to come to Atlanta, where you get more house for your money, great opportunities, economic empowerment and growth, and then also they get to enjoy the type of social life Atlanta allows," Harris said.

Dee McClendon just bought his first condo in Atlanta's West End neighborhood after moving from Chattanooga, Tenn., in January. After eight months in the city, McClendon is still bursting with excitement.

"I wouldn't trade this for anything in the world," McClendon said. "I fucking love it here, this is my mecca, and I'm going to make her to be the most outstanding bitch that I can make her!

"The only thing I knew about Atlanta from my younger experience was partying," McClendon added. "But now, it's more opportunity, and they have a lot of things going on, especially for people living with HIV and AIDS — it's a lot of support."

Part of what makes black gay Atlanta so unique is that it's not monolithic or confined to the clubs, Gibson said. The city has social circles for black gay folks living with HIV, for singles and couples, for tennis players and wine lovers, Gibson discovered after exploring more of Atlanta.

"You could see that you didn't have just one or two places [for socializing] — you've got to make choices now because you've got dozens," Gibson said.

GROWING PAINS

When earlier generations of black gay men and lesbians arrived in Atlanta, many were eager and uninhibited about building a black gay infrastructure.

"We started forming new organizations for all these newcomers, and we could afford to be very out here because we weren't at home," Teague said.

In addition to ITLA, Atlanta is home to numerous black gay organizations, from HIV/AIDS groups like the National AIDS Education & Services for Minorities and Atlanta's Life Line, to social and discussion groups like Second Sunday, Affair With Flair and ZAMI, a group for lesbians of African descent.

But there are signs that Atlanta's black gay mecca hasn't yet materialized completely. Despite the thousands of black gay people who will party in Atlanta this weekend, no more than 200 have ever turned out for the "Stand Up & Represent" march that takes place on Labor Day. And it is difficult to get a sense of the size of Atlanta's black gay population — or its major issues — in many of the city's leading gay organizations.

On Sept. 1, two of Atlanta's top black gay party promotion companies team up with longtime activists to try to stimulate awareness and action by hosting a "State of Black Gay America" summit.

"The gay summit is us trying to have some more community-based events," said Terrance Mcgee, an organizer with Xtreme Entertainment. "We really feel there's no one out there in the black gay community fighting for our rights."

McClendon has observed other shortcomings in his brief time in Atlanta.

"We have just a few more things that need to be touched on here in the city," he said. "You know, the religion thing, the blacks are not taking caution of what they do [sexually] and you have ... homeless kids."

Black gay Atlanta still has some growing to do, but it's already come a mighty long way, Teague said.

"I wish we could live up to the reputation we have," Teague said. "There is a community here — it's not perfect and we don't have all of the institutions we need, but that's because we haven't built them, not because we couldn't.

"If you are a black gay person here in Atlanta, you can, if you want, build a black gay life here and not have every obstacle in your way," Teague added. "There will be some challenges, but it won't be Omaha."

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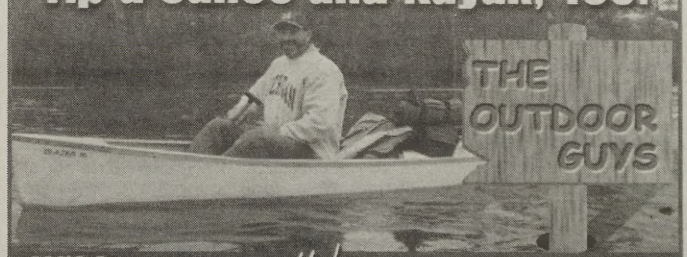

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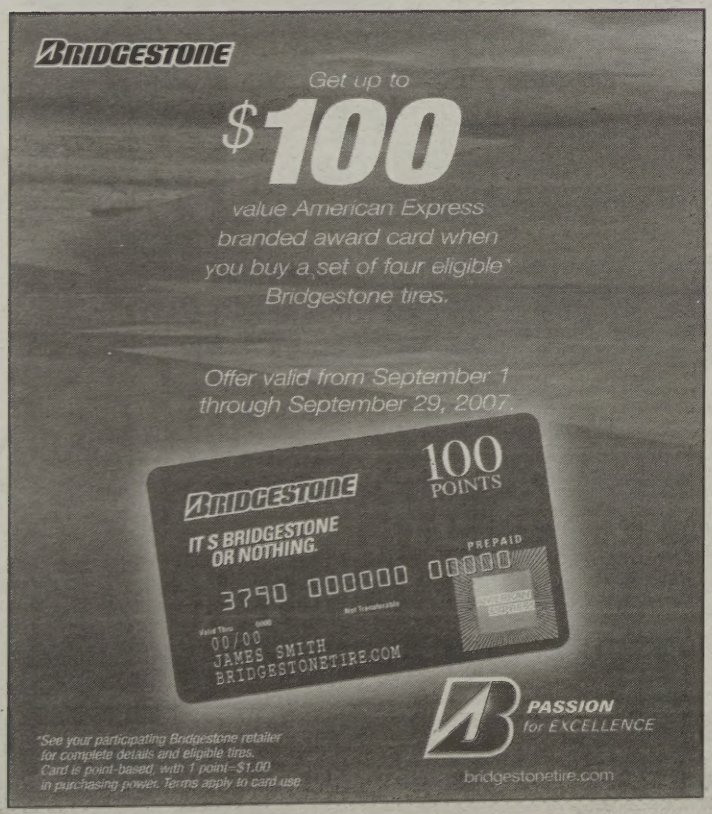
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SOVO ATLANTA NEWS BRIEFS

SoVo writers win national gay journalism awards

Southern Voice senior reporter Ryan Lee went to San Diego on Thursday to accept the 2007 Sarah Pettit Memorial Award for Excellence in the LGBT Press. Presented by the National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association, the award is the highest honor given to a writer in the gay press.

The Pettit award "is intended to recognize the outstanding contributions of a single journalist to the LGBT media landscape," according to NLGJA, an organization of gay journalists and other media professionals that cites 1,300 members.

An NLGJA judge described Lee's articles as "the best entries in the competition," noting that "Each had an interesting angle and a narrow focus. Very solid journalism."

Lee joined the Southern Voice staff in August 2003 after interning with the paper as a student at Auburn University.

"The stories and people of gay Atlanta make it easy and enjoyable to do interesting writing," he said. "I'm excited to be able to tell some of our stories — particularly the ones that don't get told elsewhere like HIV/AIDS, anti-gay discrimination and black gay life — and am honored to be recognized by my queer peers."

SoVo reporter **Ryan Lee** won the 2007 Sarah Pettit Memorial Award for Excellence in the LGBT Press

The award was to be presented Aug. 30 at the fourth annual LGBT Media Summit, part of NLGJA's national conference in San Diego.

"We are very proud of Ryan and the recognition he has brought to himself and to Southern Voice," said Bob Gunby, publisher of SoVo and David Magazine, where Lee also serves as deputy editor.

Mark King, a freelance writer for Southern Voice, also took first place in Opinion/Editorial writing in NLGJA's annual awards for his column, "When we were heroes." An NLGJA judge described the column as "a powerful piece of writing that reminds us all of the dark and dreaded days when AIDS was a death sentence."

King said he was "blown away" by the award. "I wrote 'When We Were Heroes' because I'm amazed at how mundane life can seem today, in contrast to the daily horrors of AIDS in the 1980s, and the incredible courage so many of us displayed then," he said. "I'm proud of the man I was during those times. I'd like to think I could be that courageous again, but who knows what our future lives will require of us?"

A former staffer at AID Atlanta, King later moved to Florida and now is in the process of moving to Quebec City, Canada, to live with his partner. He is working on a novel about the impact of crystal meth on gay men.

— Laura Douglas-Brown

Popular drag king, activist injured in motorcycle accident

Melvin Arundelli, also known to many in Atlanta's queer community as PeeWee, was seriously injured in a motorcycle accident in the early morning hours of Aug. 23 and is currently in critical but stable condition at Grady Hospital.

MORE INFO
We Love PeeWee
www.myspace.com/welovepeewee
welovepeewee@gmail.com

"He's had a feeding tube implanted and is fighting off an infection," said friend Jamie Fergerson, who is helping keep Arundelli's status updated on a "We Love PeeWee" Myspace page devoted to keeping people informed about his condition.

"We are all amazed how well the community has come together and he would have done the same," Fergerson said. "There has been a wonderful outpouring of love and concern."

Fergerson noted also that Arundelli is receiving top-knotch care by the doctors, nurses and social workers at Grady Hospital.

"He is receiving phenomenal care, especially toward transgender issues. They have been amazing taking care of him and taking care of us," said Fergerson.

Since Arundelli was admitted into the hospital, friends and loved ones have gathered daily at the hospital to show support to him and his family as well as offer support to each other, Fergerson added.

Melvin, a.k.a. **PeeWee**

Arundelli does not have health insurance and numerous fundraisers are being held to offset medical costs. People can also make donations to his medical fund through MondoHomo's website at www.mondohomo.com.

To date, approximately $2,000 has been raised through efforts by people including GiGi Monroe, the Court of Kings and the Femme Mafia as well as individuals.

Check donations can be made out to "MondoHomo" and mailed to PeeWee c/o MondoHomo, 251 Tye St. SE, Atlanta, GA 30316. Also, cash donations are being accepted at Charis Books & More, 1189 Euclid Ave. NE.

— Dyana Bagby

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SOVO NATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

Rev. Jane Spahr

Minister guilty of violating Presbyterian law for officiating at gay weddings

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A Presbyterian minister was found guilty of violating church law for officiating the weddings of two lesbian couples, the minister's defense team said last week. A regional judicial committee of the Presbyterian Church (USA) ruled 6-2 that while Rev. Jane Spahr of San Rafael "acted with conscience and conviction," her actions were still at odds with the church's constitution, her defense team said in a statement. The ruling, delivered late Aug. 23 to lawyers for Spahr and the church, reversed a lower court's decision in March 2006 that found Spahr acted within her rights as an ordained minister when she married the couples in 2004 and 2005. Spahr was the first minister of her faith to be tried for officiating the weddings of gay couples. She has since retired.

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POLITICS

Foley not likely to be charged in page scandal

WASHINGTON — Former Congressman Mark Foley (R-Fla.) is unlikely to face criminal charges for sending sexually explicit e-mails to teenage boys, sources close to the year-long investigation have told Scripps Howard News Service, which broke this latest report last week. That could change if new evidence surfaces that proves Foley, 52, sent online messages to male teenagers with the intent to "seduce, solicit, lure, entice or attempt to seduce a child," a third degree felony under Florida law, the service said. But for now, the end of Foley's political career may be the most severe consequence the former congressman faces for the revelations that stunned his longtime supporters and prompted his immediate resignation, just weeks before the 2006 election. The Fort Pierce Republican represented parts of St. Lucie, Martin, Okeechobee and Palm Beach counties. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement said last week the investigation should be completed within the next several days.

INTERNATIONAL

Nigerian men spared death as sodomy charges reduced

OSHODI, Nigeria — A group of 18 Nigerian men standing trial on homosexual charges, which are illegal in the country, avoided death sentences last week in a Bauchi State Sharia court, when the charges were reduced to idleness and "possession of female dressings," the Daily Champion, a Nigerian newspaper, reported. In Nigeria, these charges carry penalties of one year in jail and 20 strokes of the cane each. An angry mob of people gathered at the court protested the reduction in sentence and threw stones at police demanding the men be released for what some called "instant justice." Some in the crowd said the men desecrated the Islamic religion as all 18 men on trial are Muslim, the paper said. Several cars near the court were smashed. Had the initial charges of sodomy stuck, the men could have been hanged by Bauchi State Sharia law. Five of the men were released on bail. The others were kept in jail, according to a BBC report. A trial for the reduced charges is on hold while prosecutors research the case. The charges stem from an incident two weeks prior in which the men were arrested in a hotel room while dressed in women's clothes.

— From staff and wire reports

Craig arrest puts spotlight on bathroom sex

Anti-gay Idaho senator's case captivates, baffles national media

By LOU CHIBBARO JR.

News this week that Republican U.S. Sen. Larry Craig of Idaho had been arrested and pleaded guilty to a disorderly conduct charge for allegedly seeking a sexual encounter in an airport restroom has triggered yet another congressional sex scandal with possible implications for the 2008 elections, according to advocates for both major parties.

Craig, who declared in a press conference on Tuesday, "I am not gay and never have been gay," became an instant news media sensation, generating public discussion on the topics of gay sex in public restrooms and undercover police efforts to crack down on such activity.

Police at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport said an undercover officer arrested Craig June 11 in a men's public restroom after he made non-sexual gestures inside a stall with his hands and feet that police said suggested he was soliciting the officer for a "lewd act." Police said they sent the officer to the restroom in response to complaints by the public.

Craig has denied he was seeking sex in the restroom and has insisted police misunderstood his gestures, including the sliding of his foot into an adjacent stall so that it touched the foot of the plainclothes officer.

According to police, Craig stated that "he has a wide stance when going to the bathroom and that his foot may have touched mine," the arresting officer wrote.

By Wednesday, three Republican senators called for Craig's resignation and GOP Senate leaders removed him from senior committee positions. Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney quickly removed Craig's name from the Romney-for-president website, where he was listed as chair of Romney's campaign in Idaho.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) joined other GOP Senate leaders in calling for an ethics committee investigation into Craig's conduct.

But Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), one of two openly gay members of Congress, said Craig should be allowed to finish the remainder of his term, which ends January 2009, and have the option to go before Idaho voters in the 2008 election.

"What he did, it's hypocritical, but it's not an abuse of his office in the sense that he was taking money for corrupt votes," Frank told the Associated Press.

Gay activists were quick to point to Craig's long record opposing gay civil rights legislation in his career of more than 20 years as a congressman and senator, including his vote in 1996 against a bill to ban employment discrimination against gays.

He voted twice for a proposed constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage and has expressed opposition to allowing gays to serve openly in the military.

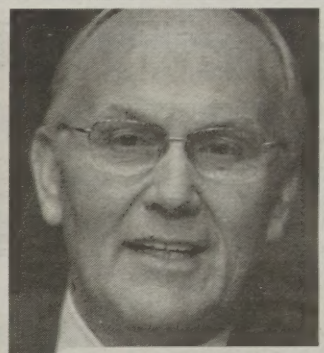
"Senator Craig is the latest in a string of public officials who have yet to learn that the days of treating Congress as a game of charades where you say one thing and do another are over," said Joe Solmonese, president of the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest gay civil rights organization.

Other gay activists, while saying they don't condone public sex, expressed concern that Craig's current predicament was brought about, in part, by the type of police sting operation that gays have long criticized as abusive and unnecessary.

Sean Kosfsky, director of policy for the Triangle Foundation, a Michigan-based gay advocacy group that monitors law enforcement issues, said it was ironic that an anti-gay politician like Craig became ensnared in a police operation that appears to be unfairly targeting mostly closeted gay or bi men

Kosfsky and other activists have called on police to deploy uniformed officers to discourage and, if necessary, make arrests in cases where public sex is a problem. They have argued that sting operations, which critics call "entrapment" schemes, are unnecessary and rarely result in stopping the problem of public sex or sexual solicitation.

"Senator's Craig's arrest was one of thousands of these arrests that take place across the country each year," Kosfsky said.



U.S. Sen. **Larry Craig** (R-Idaho) insists he's not gay. (Photo by AP)

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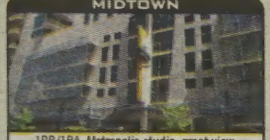

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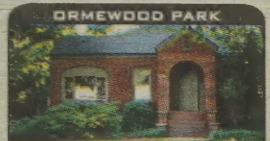

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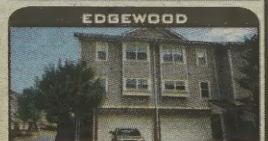

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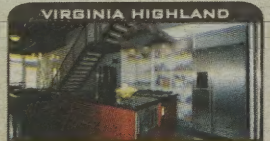

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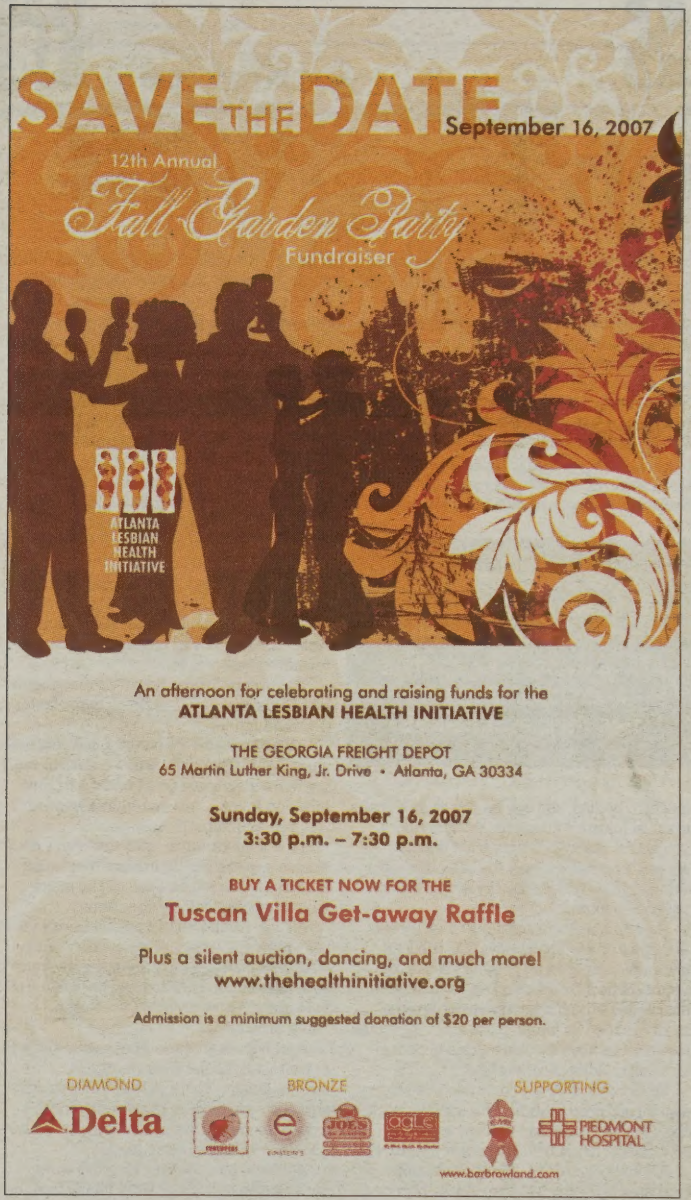
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LEAD & FOLLOW

U.S. Sen. Larry Craig (R-Idaho) has gotten himself into a bit of a pickle.

It appears the senator was seeking sex in the Minneapolis airport restroom (he claims he was trying to pick up a piece of paper) when an undercover police officer thought he was asking for, er, a hand. He was arrested and pleaded guilty to lewd conduct, paid a fine and is on probation.

In a press conference this week, Craig insisted he is not gay. His anti-gay voting record apparently is supposed to be proof of that.

With Craig up for re-election this year, Idahoans should take the **LEAD** and vote him out of office — not because he may or may not be gay, but because of his outright hypocrisy.

And while GOP leaders are calling for an ethics investigation into Craig, they should **FOLLOW** their own example and call for an investigation into Sen. David Vitter (R-La.), who last month acknowledged he committed "a very serious sin in my past."

That "sin" was paying for sex with the "D.C. Madam" — the senator's phone number was found in her little black book.

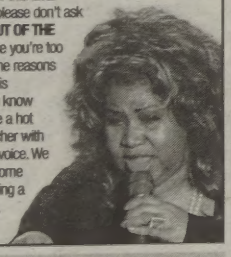
The National Lesbian & Gay Task Force points out that, despite the sin, Vitter received "thunderous applause" from Senate GOP colleagues during a policy lunch held a few days after his admission.

You guys can't have it both ways.

GET OUT OF THE WAY

We were thrilled a few weeks ago to learn Aretha Franklin was headlining Atlanta's Montreux Jazz Festival this weekend, with special group rates given to people visiting from all over the world for Black Gay Pride.

But when the Queen of Soul canceled last week due to the heat — even after the city offered her a different, indoor venue — we lost a little R-E-S-P-E-C-T for this diva.



Honey, please don't ask us to **GET OUT OF THE WAY** because you're too hot. One of the reasons we love you is because you know how to make a hot night a scorcher with your mighty voice. We hope you'll come back. And bring a fan with you.

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Ex-gay tools

By LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN

CHARLENE COTHRAN IS A TOOL.

Not in the colloquial sense, though some might think she is that too, but in the literal sense: The former Atlanta resident, who now also considers herself a former lesbian, has become a tool of the religious right.

Last week, Americans for Truth About Homosexuality — one of the most rabidly anti-gay organizations in the country — announced a date change for its first annual banquet, with Cothran as one of two keynote speakers for the October event.

The missive came just days after lesbian and gay Atlantans, backed by the Human Rights Campaign's Religion & Faith Program, released a YouTube video designed to counter a YouTube clip of Cothran's July appearance on Pat Robertson's "The 700 Club."

"Charlene's change and her decision to go public was a shock and a betrayal to everyone who knew her in the GLBT world. The African-American GLBT leadership in Atlanta felt that a response was needed," according to the group, represented in the video clip by Rev. Kathi Martin and Duncan Teague.

The response video targets people who might also feel as lonely as Cothran claims she was as a lesbian, with Martin and Teague stressing that there are resources and support for spiritually oriented gay people that do not require them to suppress their sexual orientation.

Watching Cothran on "The 700 Club," Martin says in the HRC video, "I almost felt like she was a victim, and we ended up becoming victims by extension."

Martin kindly argues that Cothran is a victim of "bad Biblical interpretation," but that doesn't go quite far enough.

The local activists are absolutely right that a response is needed, but the betrayal goes way beyond people who knew Cothran or Venus Magazine, the black gay and lesbian publication she founded here in 1995 and has now converted into an ex-gay tome.

By allowing themselves to be used at fundraisers by far-right conservative groups, many of which also expound views that are racist and sexist, Cothran and other prominent ex-gays hurt everyone who believes in equality and justice.

MANY OF THE ACTIVISTS INVOLVED WITH THIS weekend's Black Gay Pride celebration in Atlanta may be familiar with Cothran, Venus Magazine, or Venus Landin, the local activist for whom the magazine was named. A "history" section on the Venus website even lists Cothran as a co-founder of In The Life Atlanta, the group that sponsors official activities for Labor Day Weekend's Black Pride festivities.

Cothran founded Venus Magazine as a tribute to her friend, a black lesbian and key Atlanta organizer who was murdered in a domestic violence incident in 1993.

But last year, Cothran said she experienced a religious calling to change her sexual orientation, leading her to attempt a similar conversion on Venus — to the outrage of many of the magazine's former readers and supporters.

She's made headlines in gay and Christian media ever since, including her appearance last month on "The 700 Club," where her story was praised as "amazing" by host Pat Robertson — the same Pat Robertson who predicted hurricanes and "possibly a meteor" as God's wrath on tolerating homosexuality, said feminism will make women kill their children

After a summer filled with headline-grabbing 'former' homosexuals, ATL activists take matters — and video cameras — into their own hands.

and turn lesbian, and opposed for years an end to racial injustice in apartheid South Africa.

And the renewed attention to Cothran's alleged conversion is only the latest salvo in a summer filled with ex-gay news, with more reportedly coming.

Back in May, the ironically named Parents & Friends of Ex-Gays & Gays filed a federal lawsuit hoping to force Virginia's Arlington County School District to allow its fliers to be distributed to high school students. A settlement reached last month could allow the group to submit its fliers for distribution to elementary and middle-school students.

Supporters of ex-gay conversion therapy also earned press coverage this summer with news that the American Psychological Association was starting to review the group's 10-year-old policy that opposes counseling that considers being gay a mental illness, but does not explicitly condemn ex-gay "reparative" therapy.

Meanwhile, a few renegade researchers who advocate ex-gay therapy are reportedly hard at work on studies of their own. According to their opponents at Ex-Gay Watch and Truth Wins Out, researchers plan to release the results of "The Thomas Project," a five-year study of participants in the ex-gay Exodus Ministries, later this year.

Ex-Gay Watch charges the study used a small sample and relied only on self-reports of conversions; Truth Wins Out is urging media to ignore any study that does not use some sort of quantitative science — such as an MRI that can detect brain changes when lying — to tell if the participants are telling the truth about their attractions and sexual orientation.

NONE OF THIS WOULD BE TERRIBLY DISTURING if the "ex-gays" would keep their conversions to themselves. In some ways, the renewed focus on ex-gay testimonies and research in the last few months could even be considered a sign of progress.

Desperate times call for desperate measures, as the saying goes, and those who stridently oppose equal rights for gay Americans are swimming against a rising tide. From polls that show young voters supporting gay rights at record numbers, to all of the Democratic presidential candidates supporting civil unions for gay couples, signs abound that we are winning the battle for public opinion.

It makes sense, then, that social conservatives would want to cloak their shrill opposition to even the most basic civil rights protections in feigned compassion for individual "ex-gays."

It's disappointing, however, that people like Cothran — who ought to know better — would fall for it.

In the YouTube response video released Aug. 15, Martin challenges viewers to realize that "it's not about who you love, but how you love. ... Are you loving honestly? Are you being just?"

That's the problem with Cothran's decision to expand her "ministry," as she now describes Venus on a page of the magazine's website seeking donations.

It's not intellectually honest to call yourself delivered from homosexuality when what you have actually achieved, by your own admission, is celibacy where you are "too busy" to be attracted to anyone — "men or women."

And it's not just to sell out your story to extremists like Pat Robertson and Americans for Truth, whose records suggest they are motivated more by politics than compassionately ministering to gay people or other minorities.

As I've written before, I have nothing against people who are so unhappy that they would rather choose to stop acting on their sexual identity than find a way to embrace it in the context of their spiritual beliefs.

The problem comes when these people, who often readily acknowledge that they have not been able to completely change their attractions, attempt to export their personal decisions to an entire community — one that offered them more genuine love and support than they will ever receive from their new right-wing benefactors.

All of us, including Venus, deserve better.

Editor **Laura Douglas-Brown** can be reached at **lbrown@sovo.com**

soap box

SOUTHERN VOICE

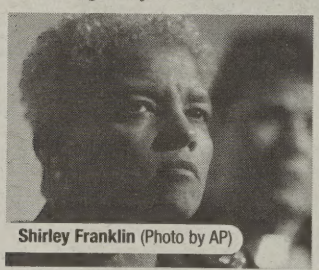
School Board Meeting Today
I PROPOSE THAT WE BAN GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES ON THE GROUNDS THAT THEY DISCRIMINATE AGAINST LESBIANS, BISEXUALS, AND TRANSGENDERS!
THAT OUGHT TO KEEP THE ACLU OUT OF IT!
e-mail: EditorialCartoon@caglecartoons.com ©2007

To read the articles that inspired these comments from readers, or to submit your own comments on the gay issues of the day, visit **www.sovo.com** and click **Sound Off**.

Blame Mayor Franklin for Midtown crime woes

Re concerns over Midtown security efforts (letters and Soapbox, Aug. 10-24):

Your readers are correct that there clearly is an irresponsible party in terms of keeping Midtown safe, but it's not the Midtown Ponce Security Alliance. Citizens don't take to patrolling the neighborhoods when the job is being done by the police. So when you look for your villain, you need to move further down the street and knock on Mayor Franklin's door. The discussion should be less about the MPSA and more about a fundamental failure of the APD to do get the job done.



Shirley Franklin (Photo by AP)

Midtown should temper security with compassion

Re "Gay group hopes to counter Midtown security tactics," (news, Aug. 17):

For the last few weeks I have read one article after another about the Midtown Ponce Security Alliance and thought Southern Voice might be overreacting. Then on a recent morning on my way to work, I saw the MPSA guy mistreat one of the prostitutes at the Exxon station on Ponce de Leon Avenue. The convenience store clerk had locked the door to clean the cooler or go to the bathroom. At the same time a prostitute wanted to go in the convenience store for something and of course found the door locked. The MPSA guy in the truck… just condescendingly told her that "nobody wants you around here" and "people in the neighborhood don't want to see you any more."

I commented to the MPSA guy about how he could be a little more compassionate. He just brushed me off and told me that "running her off" is the only option for "getting rid of her used condoms and needles." I see her often on Ponce day and night. She is a white woman who speaks with a strong southern accent. She appears to be about 50 years old. She tried to get into the car with me one time so she is obviously a prostitute. And she is not well emotionally and physically.

I don't want prostitution in my neighborhood, and I would not trust this woman, but where is the compassion? This woman is probably shell-shocked from growing up with domestic abuse, neglect and violence; ran away as a teenager only to find exploitation; and now has nowhere to run because the system doesn't have anything to offer and the judgmental gentrifying neighborhood only has cheers for her arrest.

There is no love and friendship on the mean streets of Ponce and Boulevard, only crack. And this will be this woman's world until she winds up as a Jane Doe in a potters field somewhere. This is very difficult for rich Midtown yuppies to relate to.

How about a gay bar for manly gay men?

Re "Hoedowns shuttered" (news, Aug. 17):

Another "Gay Atlanta" icon has bit the dust and quite honestly, I could give a crap that Hoedowns has closed their doors — that's what happens when you run a business and get greedy. I used to enjoy it on occasion. The new cover charge I could live with, but after I heard they incorporated drag into the bar I knew I'd never go back. Not everyone in the gay community enjoys seeing men prancing around like women!

Even though during its heyday, 99 percent of the guys at Hoedowns couldn't saddle a horse if they had to (much less ride one with any sort of skill), at least most of them looked and acted like a male. With the new ownership came cover charges, drag and sissy boys — none of which I care to be around or associate with.

I'm a gay MAN that likes MEN who enjoys the company of other MEN and manly things. Hoedowns lost my business as soon as the drag queens set foot in the place. I just hope any non-profits that might have benefited from any generosity the original owners had can find those funds elsewhere to still help our community.

Don't get panties in a wad over Shirley Q.

Re Soapbox (Aug. 17):

Camp drag is fun and for fun. Don't get your panties in a wad. As long as Ms. Liquor does not put down black people she is OK.

Hey, fags, can we just get over the 'maricon' remark?

Re "The great gay debate" (news, Aug. 17):

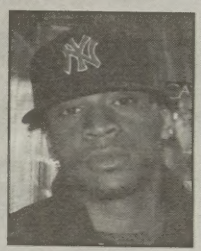
Oh good God. So New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson called Don Imus a "maricon." WHO F**ing CARES! Get over it fellow faggots! There are more important issues to worry about in this country. Personally, I am gay and faggot is one of the terms used to refer to us. I take more offense to grouping us with all the bisexuals and transgenders with the use of LGBT than I do someone calling us fags.

I think we missed the main point that Gov. Richardson was trying to make. We can't act like little kids: politics is for adults. If you can get 70 or 80 percent of what you want, grab it — and we will get the rest later.

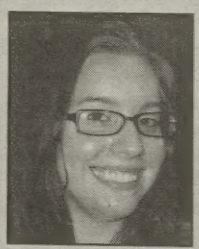
THE Q

Traditionally, white shoes are not supposed to be worn after Labor Day. What fashion rule do you wish would be enforced?

No dirty looks. And get a pedicure before you wear sandals.
Huey Wilinguyen, 28
Southeast Atlanta



No bright colors.
Tyl Waiters, 29
Cobb County



I think lesbians don't observe fashion rules. We will probably make up our own and they will involve flannel. The mullet's out, but we will find a way to bring it back.
Adrianne Wavelick, 20
College Park

I think mullets are definitely out and no one should have one.
Hanna Davis, 18
Moultrie

No visible pantylines.
Liz Shavers, 18
Columbus

Compiled by Rob Beck

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Black, gay and gifted: Standing on principle

viewpoint
ANARÉ V. HOLMES

Atlanta Black Gay Pride is more than a party. It's about honoring and affirming who we are.

WHEN I TAKE TO THE STREETS ON LABOR DAY as a first-time participant in the Stand Up & Represent March, which concludes In The Life Atlanta's 11th Annual Black Gay Pride celebration, I will walk from a place of strength and power.

It's taken the better part of 32 years on Earth to fully wrap my mind around the fact I can no longer be invisible in the larger community as a black gay man.

I can no longer sit on the sidelines and let others speak for me.

I can no longer watch institutions and programs — created by black gays and lesbians — continue to flounder without doing my part to lend a hand.

Maturity births the wisdom to acknowledge how the fight to eradicate homophobia and struggle to achieve human rights among all who are oppressed cannot be done alone, but through the assistance of diverse allies — transcending race, gender, class and other social constructs.

No greater movement reveals the points our lives intersect as Americans than in the struggle for civil and human rights.

A product of integration, I am a child of the dream Martin and others envisioned.

And, while the nation's isms are still present, with access to unparalleled resources and opportunities our forefathers and foremothers could only imagine, I'm more than capable to do the work required to build up the very institutions and programs responsible for my existence.

For being allowed the chance to experience safe, open and tolerant spaces for self-expression, the least I can do is affirm the experience of same-gender-loving men and women.

SO WHEN I MEET OTHER STAND UP & REPresent participants at the King Center on Labor Day, I'll reflect on the legacy several pioneering groups achieved to help make this city a welcoming place of refuge for thousands of African-American gays and lesbians.

These contributions — from groups including, but not limited to, the Gay Atlanta Minority Association (Theo Thomas); the African-American Lesbian & Gay Alliance (Maurice O'Brien Franklin and Edna Brown); the Atlanta Feminist Women's Chorus (Carolyn Mobley); and the Coalition of African Descent — ushered in current community institutions such as ZAMI, In The Life Atlanta, the National AIDS Education Services for Minorities, Inc. and a host of other organizations.

The fruits of their labor are a testament to the critical mass of black gays and lesbians that reside in Atlanta and share common ground in advancing the rights, health and wellness of an underserved community — a clear advantage to living here versus other places where resources are absent.

There are dynamic men and women choosing to raise their voices to improve the quality of life for the city's LGBTQ community of color.

These boot-strappers are filled with ambition and determination to build on the accomplishments of elders like Duncan Teague, Rudolph Carn, Mary Anne Adams, Dee Dee Chamblee, Betty Couvertier, Pat Hussain and Craig Washington, to name a few.

I see these young leaders at the monthly Second Sunday discussions, revived by khalid kamau. I hear them on the airwaves as is the case with Lakara Foster on 89.3 WRFG FM's Alternative Perspectives. I see the work the folks over at ITLA perform to produce one of the largest Black Pride events in the world.

ATLANTA BLACK GAY PRIDE IS MORE THAN party. It's about honoring and affirming who we are. The talents, skills, abilities and contributions we've made in all facets of American life cannot be denied. More of us are coming out. More of us are growing into the men and women we are called to be.

As a black gay man, I've come to understand my place in the world and what I've been called to do, which is to use my gifts and abilities to build others up. Through unconditional love and acceptance from a supportive family, I was blessed to witness a father who displays courage and follows the beat of his own drum—a true man's man. I'd like to think the apple didn't fall far from the tree.

*Writer and media specialist **Anaré V. Holmes** is a producer for WRFG 89.3 FM's Alternative Perspectives program. He can be reached at avholmes@hotmail.com.*

SOUTHERN VOICE
SOVO
scene

Jordan Knight

Team Gina

The Court of Kings

LAST SPLASH

LABOR GAY WEEKEND BIDS SUMMER ADIEU WITH HOTLANTA STYLE

By ROB BECK
rbeck@sovo.com

LABOR DAY WEEKEND IS WIDELY KNOWN AS SUMMER'S LAST hurrah, the last big party weekend before everyone buckles down for the fall and winter. This year, Atlanta's wide range of parties and events, in addition to Black Gay Pride, offer a fitting goodbye to the season.

The Court of Kings, Atlanta's premier drag king troupe, kicks the holiday weekend off on Friday, Aug. 31, at Masquerade with the first installment of its new weekly show, "Grind."

"Grind" takes a cue from "Spark," Masquerade's Saturday night show, by featuring "spotlight performances," two shorter shows taking place at 12:15 a.m. and 1:15 a.m., instead of one hour-long show.

Court of Kings master of ceremonies Owen McCord says the crowd should appreciate this punctuated approach to showmanship.

"This way the night just continuously flows; there's not a breakup of an hour-long show," he says. "A lot of people just want to have a good time and dance and see a show, but not let it take up their entire evening. We're trying to bring something a little different."

McCord says that "Grind" offers a lower-priced alternative to other Labor Day Weekend parties that fits perfectly with the spirit of the holiday, and that diversity and unity are two key aspects of the Kings' mission.

"It gives us girls a chance to come to a party that's not quite as expensive as the rest of the parties," he says, "and it's a very mixed crowd between guys and girls of different races. Everybody automatically knows they're welcome, and that's what we want."

The Kings shows at the now-closed Red Chair are the atmosphere McCord and company want to recreate.

"It's a summer party," he says. "It's going to be a lot of grinding, it's going to be hot music. We're trying to bring back what we used to have [at Red Chair], and that's what this weekend represents for a lot of people. It's about coming together, so we're just going to have a big, old party for everybody."

AS ALWAYS, BOYS ARE WELCOME AT THE COURT OF KINGS' SHOW, but gay men have a few parties of their own in the works.

Fruitcake Productions gets in on the Labor Day Weekend action with two major parties. First up is Saturday's late night "Passion," featuring local DJ VanCronkhite, followed by Sunday's blowout "2-T-Fruity," with DJ/Producer Ralphi Rosario.

Fruitcake's Fernando Jardim looks forward to the energy Rosario brings to his sets.

"Ralphi is one of the most talented DJ/producers in the US and a great friend," Jardim says. "We have worked with him on several previous occasions, either alone or with his partner in crime Abel, and the events are always a huge hit with our community."

Jardim says he hopes this installment of "2-T-Fruity" provides the perfect accent to the weekend's events.

"Labor Day is a special holiday when everyone is in town and off on Monday, so we thought it would be a great fit for an unforgettable '2-T-Fruity' Tea Dance," he says.

Also on the weekend's party docket are DJ Chris Cox's appearance via OVAH! Production's Saturday night shindig

Please see **LABOR DAY** on **Page 40**

Tim Gunn, Page 30 • Jungle goes country, Page 32 • Pride Literati, Page 34

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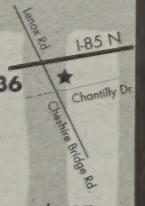

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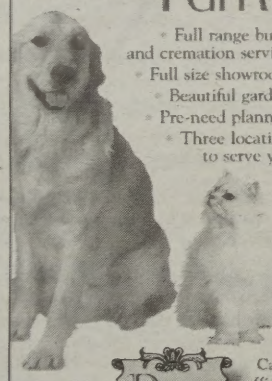

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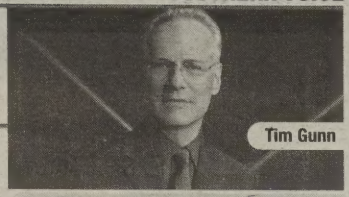

'Project Runway' mentor Tim Gunn premieres new series

Reality show celebrity Tim Gunn breaks from "Project Runway" to explore the closets of unfashionable women on his new show "Tim Gunn's Guide to Style," which debuts Sept. 6 on Bravo. "Guide" empowers willing subjects with new wardrobes based on theory from Gunn's best-selling tome "Tim Gunn: A Guide to Quality, Taste and Style."

"These women have self-declared their need for help, and basically, they share being in a fashion rut," Gunn explains of the 13 women who undergo transformations during the first season.

'Tim Gunn's Guide to Style'
Thursday, Sept. 6, 10 p.m. on Bravo
Comcast channel 70

One-time supermodel Veronica Webb appears alongside Gunn as a shopping expert. They work with each woman to "bring out her own, personal style," Gunn says, though the show includes tips from which he says every woman can benefit.

Gunn worked as chair of fashion design at Parson's The New School of Design through March 2007, before resigning to become chief creative officer for Liz Claiborne. He says he will return for at least one more season of "Project Runway," which begins its new season in late fall 2007.

— Zack Hudson

Pride quickens countdown to Falltacular retreat

When Will Horn and the other organizers of the Falltacular retreat host their Black Gay Pride party at Joe's Crab Shack in Marietta on Sept. 1, they know they already have one thing going for them.

"That's one of the few events going on that weekend that won't have a cover charge," Horn says of the mixer, which features appetizers, DJs and performance artists.

"We have something there once a month anyway that draws a really good crowd, so we're expecting about 300 people this weekend," Horn adds.

The monthly lead-up events at Joe's Crab Shack are opportunities for people to register for the Falltacular retreat, which takes place Nov. 8-11. Horn began the annual event six years ago when he and some friends celebrated his partner's birthday in Tennessee's Smoky Mountains.

"Here we are now where we have people registered from 20 different states," Horn says.

The four-day retreat features local celebrities like V-103 drag personality Miss Sophia, author J.L. King, and neo-soul artists Rahbi and Kimberly'Nichole. A $275 entry fee covers lodging, meals, cocktails and nightly parties. An addditional $75 buys a roundtrip from Atlanta to Pigeon Forge, Tenn., aboard a party bus.

Falltacular in the Smoky Mountains

Falltacular Pride Party
Sept. 1, 3-8 p.m.
Joe's Crab Shack
2175 Cobb Parkway
www.falltacular.com

The deadline for reservations is Oct. 8, but spaces are filling up quickly, Horn says.

— Ryan Lee

GPB's 'State of the Arts' hosts Indigo Girls

The latest episode of Georgia Public Broadcasting's quarterly series "State of the Arts" features an in-depth interview with Indigo Girls Amy Ray and Emily Saliers, as well as a GPB studio performance of their hits "Closer to Fine" and "Pendulum Swinger," among others.

The episode premiered Aug. 30 and encores are scheduled for Aug. 31 and Sept. 2. The lesbian duo discusses the reciprocal relationship between artistry and activism, and explains their songwriting techniques.

"Amy writes her own songs, and I write my own songs, but what we do together is arrange the songs," Saliers says in the interview. "We'll just play the songs for each other, or give each other tapes to absorb them and then start throwing out ideas."

Ray says that activism, through their music as well as offstage, is an integral part of their work.

"I'm proud of the good things about Georgia, and working to change the bad things," she says. "We always will be, and I think that affects our music too. There's always hope if you can affect change."

'State of the Arts'
Aug. 31, 7 p.m., Sept. 2, 4 p.m. and midnight
Georgia Public Broadcasting
Channel 8, Comcast channel 8
www.gpb.org

The episode also includes a look into the life of writer Flannery O'Connor.

— Mike Fleming

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SOVO SOUTHERN VOICE COMMUNITY

FRIDAY, AUG. 31

The Juxtaposed Center for Transformation, a transgender advocacy and education group, and AID Atlanta present an **HIV/AIDS Risk Reduction Workshop.** 7:30 p.m. at AID Atlanta, 1605 Peachtree St. NE. www.juxtaposedcenter.org, www.aidatlanta.org

Meet the Writers! Black Lesbian Authors Read New Stories includes a roster of black lesbian writers reading from their works. 8 p.m. Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse, 991 Piedmont Ave. www.nghosibooks.com

FRIDAY, AUG. 31 – SUNDAY, SEPT. 2

The **Decatur Book Festival** features a number of gay and lesbian writers. All weekend in downtown Decatur. www.decaturbookfestival.com

SATURDAY, SEPT. 1

The **State of Black Gay America Summit** offers a community-wide forum. 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. at the Renaissance Hotel's Georgia Ballroom, 590 W Peacthree St. www.atlantaprideweekend.com

SUNDAY, SEPT. 2

PHYRE presents **'The Nu Blak'** featuring performances by black lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people who work in the arts, literature, film, social and political activism and HIV/AIDS prevention. 5 p.m. at Sugar, 257 Trinity Ave. 678-280-7750, www.afterthephyre.org

SATURDAY, SEPT. 8

The Quicksilver Country Dancers hold a **Gender-Free Contra Dance,** featuring gender-neutral calling and partnering. 7:30 p.m. – 11 p.m. at the Horizons School Gymnasium, 1900 DeKalb Ave. NE. www.qcdancers.org

ON THE WEB:
For other calendars of special events, visit www.sovo.com.

TO ADD A LISTING...
e-mail calendar@sovo.com, call 404-876-1819, ext. 23, or fax to 404-876-2709, attn: Rob Beck. Entries should be submitted at least 14 days in advance of publication date.

Rubbing noses for love

High-brow pet fashion show raises funds for PALS

By RYAN LEE
rlee@sovo.com

The 'Rubbing Noses' fashion show and silent auction benefits PALS, which provides pet support for people living with HIV/AIDS and other critical illnesses.

THE POOCHES POUNCING DOWN THE RUNWAY AT THE "FOXES & Hounds" fashion show on Sept. 8 won't be your everyday German Shepherds or some lazy lapdog, but instead a group of fiercely trained modeling divas.

All of the canines in the fashion show — which is part of "Rubbing Noses 2007," a benefit for Pets Are Loving Support — are registered by the Atlanta Kennel Club, meaning they're accustomed to being underneath the unforgiving hot lights and flashing cameras.

"These are all pure breeds, so they're used to being on display and walking," says Rick Westbrook, director of operations for PALS. "Their owners treat them like divas, so that's a good thing."

The hotshot hounds and their handlers will strut across the parking lot of Macy's at Lenox Square mall showing off the latest in country manor fashion.

"There'll be a lot of tweeds," says Westbrook, who adds that the event climaxes with an underwear walk-off.

"Sex sells, and so we're going to show as much skin as we can," Westbook says.

THE LAST "RUBBING NOSES" EVENT TOOK PLACE IN 2003, AND WAS resurrected this year with the help of Macy's.

Officials in Macy's new "Pride Network" division contacted PALS to see if the two groups could partner together to host a fashion show dubbed "Doggie Style."

"Which I thought was quite brave being in the Bible Belt, and this being the first event of their Pride Network," Westbrook jokes. "But Macy's has just been incredible — it's just incredible the stuff they're pulling out for us."

Unlike previous "Rubbing Noses," everything for this year's event — the venue, dog clothing and silent auction items — was donated.

"So the admission price and all the money we raise that day will go to the bank for PALS," Westbrook says.

Organizers are expecting 500-700 people to attend this year's "Rubbing Noses," which is hosted by Star 94 funnyman Tom Sullivan.

"I hosted the [Macy's 'Doggie Style'] event for a few years when it was first introduced, and now am excited to be back as host of 'Rubbing Noses,'" Sullivan says. "I love animals and have dogs myself, so working with PALS is the perfect match."

All Star Enterprises — a lesbian-owned company based in Suwanee, Ga. — is producing the "Rubbing Noses" silent auction, which includes jewelry, trips to destinations like San Francisco and Cancun, and sports and entertainment memorabilia.

WITH AN ESTIMATED GOAL OF GENERATING $50,000-$60,000, THE "Rubbing Noses" event would regain its status as the No. 2 fundraiser for PALS, which provides pets and support for people living with critical illnesses.

"Our mainstay has always been bingo," Westbrook says. "We've got that down to a science, so much so that we've begun reaching out to different agencies and sharing the profits with them."

The other marquee fundraisers for PALS include the annual K-9 Cotillion, the East Point Possums drag show and Pins for PALS.

"It's never hard to be creative [fundraising with dogs], and we can do pretty much what we want," says Westbrook, who assumed the leadership of PALS in July.

More than 17 years after PALS was established to comfort people living with HIV/AIDS, the agency is going strong.

"There's such a need for out little niche out there," says Westbrook, adding that it's impossible to describe the devotion many people have to their four-legged loved ones. "They're not worried about living in their car, they're worried about losing their pet."

PALS buys monthly food supplies, pays for vaccinations and veterinary care and offers free foster care to its clients, 95 percent of whom are living with HIV. The agency also connects clients to other HIV/AIDS organizations and support groups.

The demographics of PALS clients have shifted over time, but the severity and potential deadliness of the disease remain the same.

"We're getting more females than we did before," Westbrook says. "I still lose clients. I went to three funerals last week; but for the three that I lost, I get six more applications."

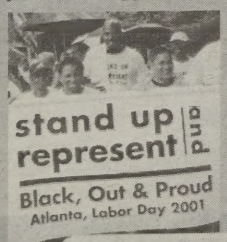
MORE INFO
Rubbing Noses 2007
Sept. 8, 2-5 p.m.
Macy's @ Lenox Square
3393 Peachtree Road
$50 VIP tickets
$20 general admission
404-876-7257
www.palsatlanta.org

SOVO FLASHBACK

Future ATL mayor joins first Black Gay Pride March

Armed with umbrellas and ponchos against the steady drizzle, an estimated 200 participants sloshed from the state capitol to the Martin Luther King Jr. Center and into history with Atlanta's first Black Gay Pride March on Labor Day 2001.

"This started as a dream," organizer Jimmie Scott told the crowd at the capitol. "I saw black gay men marching proudly, and I knew I had to make it a reality."



(Photo by Sher Pruitt)

The march was the culmination of events sponsored by In the Life Atlanta for Black Gay Pride weekend. After walking up Piedmont and across Auburn Avenue, the crowd collected under the wings of the MLK Center for Nonviolent Social Change and chanted "We're black, we're out, we're proud!"

All three 2001 mayoral candidates participated in different degrees, including Shirley Franklin, who won the election and is now serving her second term as Atlanta's mayor.

"The African-American [gay] community needs to be embraced and supported by the civil rights movement and by gay rights activists. As mayor I promise to work for all Atlantans, and by marching today I have turned by words into action," Franklin said after the march.

Southern Voice, Sept. 6, 2001

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Envy over **Blizzards,** 20-0

THIS WEEK

FRIDAY, AUG. 31 – MONDAY, SEPT. 3
Atlanta Team Tennis Association, Peach Tournament, DeKalb Tennis Center and North Fulton Tennis Center. www.atta.org

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 5
Hotlanta Soccer, www.hotlantasoccer.com

UPCOMING

SEPT. 7: Atlanta Team Tennis Association, Friday Night Drills, Glenlake Tennis Center. www.atta.org
SEPT. 8: Atlanta Team Tennis Association, Open Play Doubles, Glenlake Tennis Center. www.atta.org
SEPT. 8: Atlanta Bucks Rugby vs. Valdosta, Coan Middle School. www.atlantabucksrugby.org
SEPT. 9: Atlanta Team Tennis Association, Sunday Morning Drills, Glenlake Tennis Center. www.atta.org
SEPT. 11: Hotlanta Volleyball, Intermediate/Advanced Leagues Registration and Team Draft, www.hotlantavolleyball.org

TO ADD A LISTING... e-mail calendar@sovo.com, call 404-876-1819, ext. 23, or fax to 404-876-2709, attn. Rob Beck.

Atlanta teams ready for run at World Series

Ten teams travel to Phoenix next month as Hotlanta Softball opens fall co-ed season

By MATT HENNIE

A GAY SOFTBALL TEAM FROM ATLANTA LAST brought home a championship trophy from the North American Gay Amateur Athletic Alliance World Series in 2004. Some 10 teams will attempt to end that three-year drought next month when they travel to Phoenix for the gay softball tournament.

The Hotlanta Softball League closed its 26th season last weekend, spending two days on the field sorting out which teams will represent it at the World Series, which brings together teams from the 56 leagues across 35 cities that comprise NAGAAA.

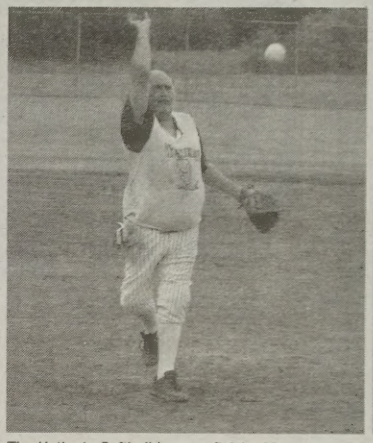
Angela Smith, who oversees HSL's Women's Division while also playing for the Gammas, now sets aside her glove and bat to ramp up fundraising efforts to cover the expected $16,000 cost of transporting, feeding and housing the team at the World Series, which runs Oct. 1-6.

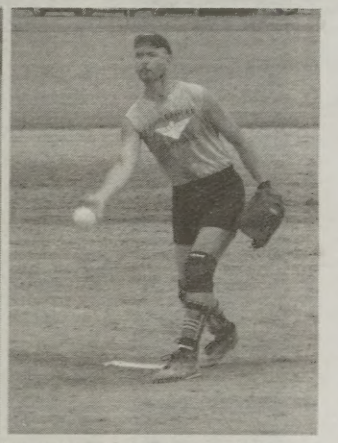
"It's the camaraderie of meeting new people, seeing how their leagues run — it is a fun time," said Smith, who's played in the World Series each year since 1997. "When you use that as your week's vacation, you want to make it something that you like."

MORE INFO
Hotlanta Softball end-of-season party
Sept. 8, 5 p.m.
Jungle, 2115 Faulkner Road
www.hotlantasoftball.org

Fall Ball sign-up
Sept. 1, 12 p.m.
Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse
991 Piedmont Ave.
Sept. 5, 7 p.m.
Woofs Atlanta, 2425 Piedmont Road
Sept. 9, 5 p.m.
No Mas! Cantina, 180 Walker St.

Fall Ball season opens
Sept. 23, 9 a.m.
Piedmont Park athletic fields





The Hotlanta Softball League finished its season last weekend and selected a slate of 10 teams to compete in the World Series. (Photos by Matt Hennie)

Atlanta's World Series teams

Open Division	*Women's Division*
Venom and A's (A)	Riptide (A)
Sluggers (B)	Gamma (B)
Packers and Eagles (C)	Gamma Light (D)
Big Tease and Wet Demons (D)	

THE GAMMAS TOOK FIRST PLACE in the Alternative Division, one of three divisions for women in HSL. The Riptide rolled to the title in the Competitive Division, while the Fusion took the Recreational title.

"The high point of the season was seeing everyone having a good time and getting better at playing ball and being more competitive. We've played a long season this year," Smith said.

In the Open Division, which is comprised mostly of men though women are allowed on the teams, four divisions crowned champions earlier this month: Venom (A), Sluggers (B) and Packers (C), while Big Tease and War Eagles split the title (D). The lineup of HSL Division Champions and the teams that take the league's World Series berths are slightly different, as one women's team opted not to travel and there are more tournament spots available in the Open Division than champions.

Now the fundraising turns serious, Smith said. The Women's Division has held a wet t-shirt contest, boxing contests and will host a golf tournament on Sept. 8 at 8 a.m. at Alfred "Top" Holmes Golf Course.

"You wouldn't believe the women who get in there and fight. They get their nose broken and black eyes. Pretty much you name it, we'll do it to raise money," Smith said.

The Gammas hope to raise enough to rent a motor home during the Phoenix tournament, a tradition that goes back several years. They park alongside the fields to rest between games. And in years when fundraising fell short, Smith said they've driven it hundreds of miles to the World Series site.

BEFORE THE EXCITEMENT OF THE WORLD Series, HSL kicks off Fall Ball, a brief co-ed season that mixes players of all skills across its six teams. For the first time, the league will play its games at the athletic fields of Piedmont Park, moving from HSL's usual home in southwest Fulton County.

"It will be new exposure for the league. It's also a good entry point for people who want to start playing," Smith said.

The season opens Sept. 23, with additional games on Oct. 14, Oct. 28 and Nov. 4.

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SOVO itinerary

SOUTHERN VOICE

AUG. 31 - SEPT. 9

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FRIDAY AUG. 31 & **SATURDAY** SEPT. 1
Men's Night Cabaret features four of Atlanta's popular male singers showcasing their talents. 8 p.m. at Onstage Atlanta, 2597 North Decatur Road. 404-897-1802. www.onstageatlanta.com

FRIDAY AUG. 31– **SUNDAY** SEPT. 2
Feel pretty, witty and gay at Theater of the Star's production of the classic **'West Side Story.'** Check website for show times at the Fabulous Fox, 660 Peachtree St. NE. www.foxtheatre.org

WEDNESDAY AUG. 22
The **Decatur Book Festival** presents a number of gay and lesbian writers, including Edmund White, who debuts his new book, and Fiona Zedde, author of 'Every Dark Desire.' All weekend in downtown Decatur. www.decaturbookfestival.com

SATURDAY SEPT. 1
After success during MondoHomo in July, lesbian hip-hop duo **Team Gina** brings its Heatwave Tour to Atlanta, accompanied by **Katastrophe** and **Athens Boys Choir**. 8 p.m. at Eyedrum, 290 MLK Jr. Drive SE Suite 8. 404-522-0655, www.eyedrum.org

FRIDAY AUG. 31
WETbar continues its 'Totally Awesome 80s' series with an appearance from former New Kid on the Block, **Jordan Knight**. 10 p.m. at WETbar, 960 Spring St. 404-745-9494, www.wetbaratlanta.com

OVAH! Productions steps up to the plate with superstar **DJ Chris Cox** headlining its Labor Day party, with a special performance by circuit diva Phoenix. 10 p.m. at the Loft at Center Stage, 1374 Peachtree St. NW. www.myspace.com/ovahpro

SUNDAY SEPT. 2
Fruitcake Productions celebrates Labor Day with a special edition of **2-T-Fruity** with **DJ Ralph Rosario**. 6 p.m. – 3 a.m. at Fever, 1789 Cheshire Bridge Road. www.fruitcakeproductions.com

FRIDAY AUG. 31
Owen and the boys of the Court of Kings unveil their new weekly show, **'Grind.'** 11:30 p.m. at Masquerade, 695 North Ave. NE. www.myspace.com/courtofkings

The **Sci-Fi Gourmet TV Dinner Theatre Cabaret** is a campy, sci-fi dream come true. 7:30 p.m. at Onstage Atlanta, 2597 N Decatur Road. 404-897-1802, www.onstageatlanta.com

MONDAY SEPT. 3
Friends on Ponce hosts its annual **Labor Day BBQ**. 4 p.m. – 6 p.m. at Friends on Ponce, 736 Ponce de Leon Ave. 404-817-3820, www.friendsonponce.com

WEDNESDAY SEPT. 5
The Alliance Theatre presents **'The Women of Brewster Place,'** a world premiere musical based on the novel by Gloria Naylor. Through Sept. 30 at the Alliance Theatre, 1280 Peachtree St. 404-733-5000, www.alliancetheatre.org

THURSDAY SEPT. 6
Actors Express premieres its new play, **'Dark Play or Stories for Boys,'** a thriller about an online connection. Through Oct. 6 at Actor's Express, 887 W. Marietta St. 404-607-SHOW, www.actors-express.com

Gay-owned Romo Gallery unveils a new show with artists **Stephanie DeArmond** and **Zane Lewis**. Through Oct. 13 at Romo Gallery, 310 Peters St. SW. 404-222-9955, www.romo-gallery.com

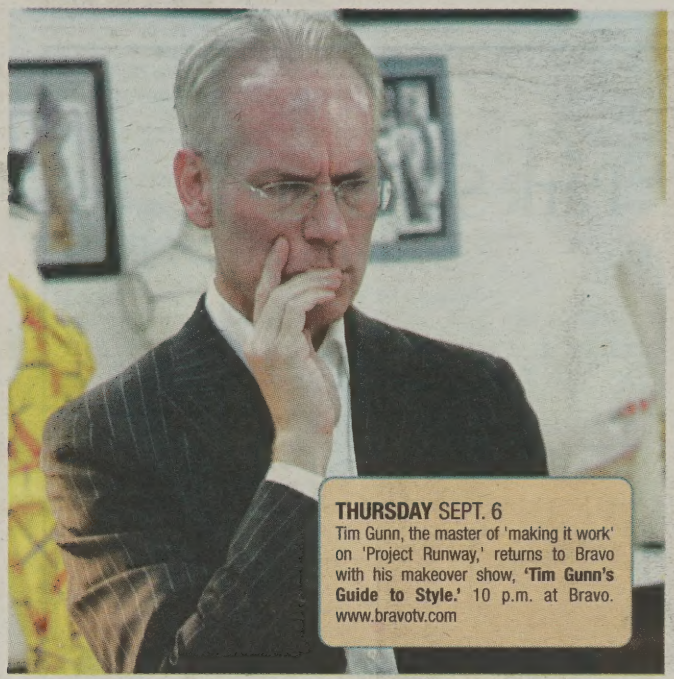
SATURDAY SEPT. 8
Quicksilver Country Dancers presents its **Gender-Free Contra Dance**. 7:30 p.m. – 11 p.m. at the Horizons School Gymnasium, 1900 DeKalb Ave. www.qcdancers.org

PALS Atlanta hosts **'Rubbing Noses,'** a fashion show and silent auction benefiting the organization, which provides pet care for ill people. 2 p.m. – 5 p.m. at Macy's Lenox Square. www.palsatlanta.org

Hotlanta Softball celebrates the end of season and the upcoming softball world series with a **party and camp drag pageant.** 10 p.m. at Jungle, 2115 Faulkner Road. www.hotlantasoftball.org

Friends on Ponce throws its **2nd Annual Turnabout Showcase**, featuring the bar's staff dressing in drag and taking the stage. 10 p.m. at Friends on Ponce, 736 Ponce de Leon Ave. 404-817-3820, www.friendsonponce.com

BLACK GAY PRIDE 2007
Event Calendar, Page 39



THURSDAY SEPT. 6
Tim Gunn, the master of 'making it work' on 'Project Runway,' returns to Bravo with his makeover show, **'Tim Gunn's Guide to Style.'** 10 p.m. at Bravo. www.bravotv.com

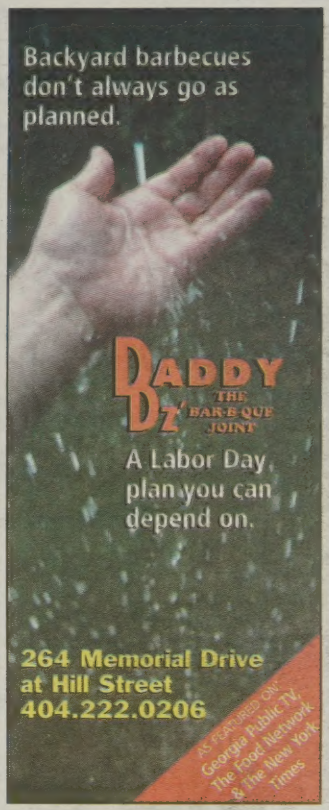
SO VO itinerary

AUG. 29 - SEPT. 9

SOUTHERN VOICE

SUNDAY SEPT. 9
Break out your sexy shoes when Paris Decatur presents its **Shoe Fetish Party**. 10 p.m. at Paris Decatur, 308H W Ponce de Leon Ave., Decatur. 404-687-1965, www.parisdecatur.com

ON THE WEB: *For other calendars of special events, visit www.sovo.com.*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AUG. 31 - SEPT. 29, 2007

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					31 The **Decatur Book Festival** begins. decaturbookfestival.com **Jordan Knight** at WETbar. www.wetbaratlanta.com **Shonia Brown** at Outwrite. www.outwritebooks.com	**SEPT. 1** **Spark at Masquerade.** www.myspace.com/chriskind **Athens Boys Choir** and **Team Gina** at Eyedrum. www.eyedrum.org
2 **2-T-Fruity** with Ralph Rosario. fruitcakeproductions.com **Voices Rising** at Charis. charisbooksandmore.com	3 **Industry Night** at Amsterdam. amsterdam-atlanta.com **Labor Day BBQ** at Friends on Ponce. friendsonponce.com	4 **Mary-oke** at Mary's. www.marysatlanta.com	5 **Walking with Dinosaurs** at Philips Arena. ticketmaster.com **'The Women of Brewster Place'** opens at the Alliance. alliancetheatre.org	6 **Stephanie DeArmond** and **Zane Lewis** at Romo Gallery. romogallery.com **Disability 101** part 3 at Charis. charisbooksandmore.com	7 **Kitty LeClaw's MeowMix** at Blake's. blakesontheparkatlanta.com **Mehme Dogu** opens at Whitespace. whitespace814.com	8 **Gender Free Contra Dance.** www.qcdancers.org **PALS Rubbing Noses.** www.palsatlanta.com **Queen of the Strut** at Mary's. marysatlanta.com
9 **Shoe Fetish Party** at Paris Decatur. www.parisdecatur.com	10 **Young Women Writers workshop** at Charis. charisbooksandmore.com	11 Drag Gone Wild presents **Project Runway** at Blake's. blakesontheparkatlanta.com	12 **PALS Bingo.** www.palsatlanta.com	13 **Princess Charles' Fashionistas** at Burkharts. www.burkharts.com **Financial Planning for the Fiscally Challenged** at Charis. charisbooksandmore.com	14 **4th Tuesday Happy Hour** at Paris Decatur. www.parisdecatur.com	15 **The Atlanta Cotillion.** www.atlantacotillion.com **Buffy: The Musical at the** Plaza Theatre. www.buffysings.com **Hector Fonseca** at Fruitcake's Passion. fruitcakeproductions.com
16 **ALHI Garden Party.** www.thehealthinitiative.org	17 **Industry Night** at Amsterdam. amsterdam-atlanta.com	18 **STOMP!** at the Fox. www.foxtheatre.org	19 **Bjork at the Fox.** www.foxtheatre.org **Cocktails with Charis** at Birdi's. www.charisbooksandmore.com	20 **Underwear Night** at the Eagle. www.atlantaeagle.com	21 **Lisa Lisa** at WETbar. www.wetbaratlanta.com	22 **Grant Park Tour of Homes** begins. www.grantpark.org
23 **Atlanta Rollergirls Tryouts.** www.atlantarollergirls.com **AGLCC 'Cruisin' on Lake Lanier.'** atlantagaychamber.org	24 **Writing with Intent workshop** at Charis. charisbooksandmore.com	25 **'The Rat Pack Live at the Sands'** opens at the Fox. www.foxtheatre.org	26 Gay author **David Leavitt** at Wordsmiths. wordsmithsbooks.com	27 AIDS Survival Project presents **'What's New in Atlanta Clinical Trials' forum.** aidssurvivalproject.org	28 **17th Street Art Fair** at Atlantic Station. www.17thstreetartfair.com	29 **CHRIS Kids' CHRIStal Ball.** www.chriskids.org **Fourth Tuesday's Best Ball Golf Tournament.** www.fourthtuesday.org

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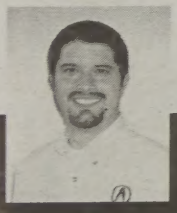

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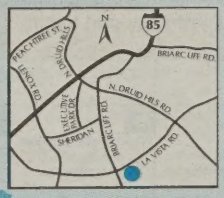

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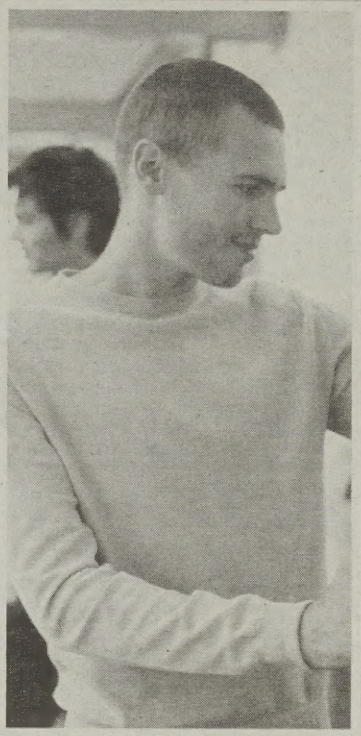

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Jungle switches to country format; others make plans in absence of Hoedowns

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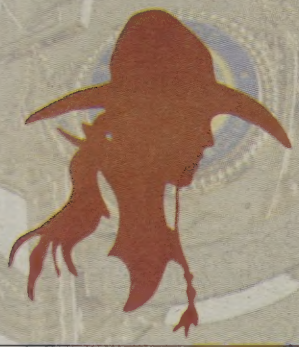

By ROB BECK

JUNGLE, FORMERLY A MAINSTAY IN ATLANTA'S gay DJ/dance scene, plans to make the switch to a country-western format, owner Brad Williams confirms.

Just as news of Hoedowns' closure started to settle in, rumors began to fly early last week as Williams circulated teaser messages on MySpace featuring Jungle's familiar "J" logo with a cowboy hat perched on top. This week, Williams confirms the switch and says he plans a name change as well as decor renovations to go along with the new format. A soft-opening is scheduled for Sept. 1 and a grand opening in mid-September.

"I enjoy country music, and I've always had the idea of doing a country-western bar, but never wanted to do one [because] I don't think there's room for two of them," he says.

He says Hoedowns' recent closing proved perfect timing for him to jump on his country-western dream, with some prompting.

"The opportunity came up and ... a lot of people came up to me and said, 'Would you consider it?'" he says. "I thought, 'This could be fun, let's go for it!'"

Williams remains mum on the name of the new bar, but he assures that patrons will see just that when they walk through the doors: a new bar.

"All the décor's changing," he says. "The wood dance floor's going in right now, and the whole place has been primered already, so it's all new."

The bar may maintain a sexy aspect, but it will be all country, all the time. There are no plans to take a cue from Hoedowns' controversial format changes that happened this year, he says.

"It'll be full-scale country," he says. "You will hear country music every time you walk through the door."

WILLIAMS ISN'T THE ONLY BAR OWNER looking to ensure that Atlanta's gay country-western fans have a bar to call their own. Original Hoedowns owner Deana Collins confirms that she is "definitely, 100 percent" set on opening a new country-western bar.

She does not confirm the new bar's location, but says it will be located in-town and called the Three-Legged Cowboy, with a grand opening tentatively scheduled for the end of September.

Collins says she didn't want to open a new bar until now because she wanted to give Hoedowns a fighting chance, and that community loyalty will be the key to her success.

"Everybody's going to cash in on a country theme now, but we started when nobody would touch country."

Collins has no plans to see her new endeavor go the same way as Hoedowns.

"This bar ain't for sale," she says. "Never again. If I drop dead, it will go to a non-profit. It has to go back to my community."

Brad Eaton, a Hoedowns shareholder who currently owns the Hoedowns name, held a meeting right after the bar's closure about reopening Hoedowns with the support of former patrons. No updates on those plans were available by press time.

Atlanta Country Kickers, a group of country music enthusiasts, sent out press releases last week announcing plans to help Hoedowns' patrons organize to support opening the bar in a new location. An Aug. 25 benefit dance drew more than 150 attendees, according to Leigh Broschat of ACK.

Broschat said this week that while the group is not affiliated with Hoedowns or Eaton, it is committed to keeping country dancing alive in Atlanta.

"We're coordinating dance places where we can all meet, stay in touch with each other, and stay connected," Broschat says. "Just because a bar has folded doesn't mean the people have to go away from each other or lose contact. I guess in a way we're sort of helping to become the glue that's helping the community stay together while we see what's going to happen."

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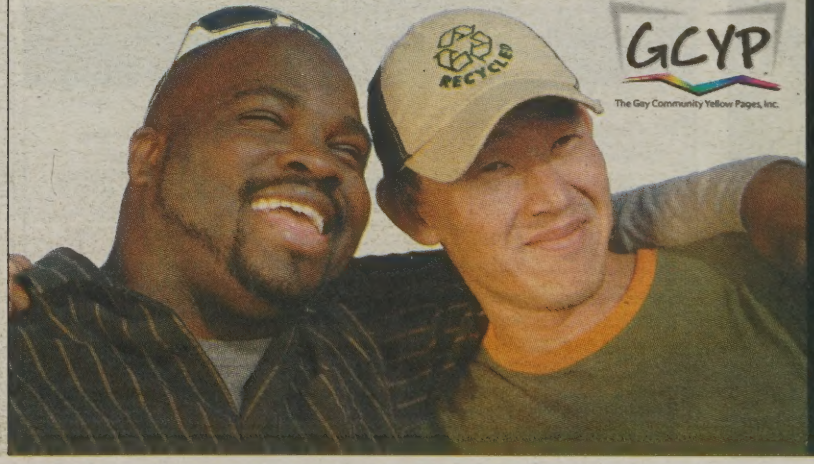

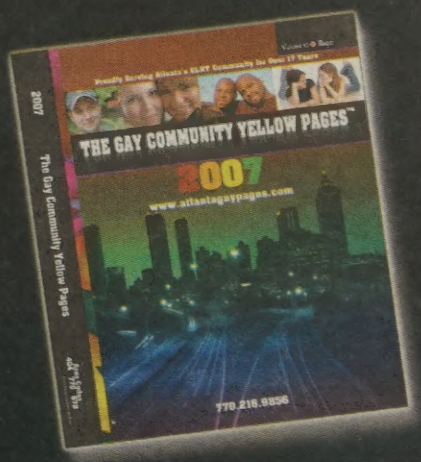

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Literary movement

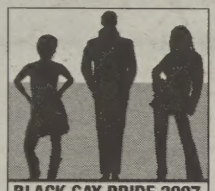
Authors take spotlight during Black Gay Pride

SOBOOKS VO

By ZACK HUDSON
zhudson@sovo.com

DAPHANY WILLIAMS-DUBOIS CAN RELATE TO just about anything. Still under age 30, the transgender author says that in her short time on earth she's suffered through enough troubles and overcome enough obstacles that she earned the right to sing the blues. But she's still looking for a happy ending, as evidenced in her book "Emotionally Scarred: Monologues for the Soul in Us."

Of course, not everybody shares Williams-Dubois' background. She was born male — alongside a twin sister — into a devoutly religious family of Jehovah's Witnesses in Niagara Falls, N.Y. She secretly began the gender transition process in her teens but faced constant pressure from her family to put away her make-up and act masculine — and straight — instead.



"When I did come out about my sexuality and being transgender, I was disowned and I was ex-communicated from the church I was raised in," she says.

SHE WAS A TEENAGER JUST OUT OF HIGH school then. Today, she is a Decatur resident with a hard-won college degree and a newly self-published book that focuses on happy endings.

"I wanted to show people that even though that was my situation, I've done something good," she says.

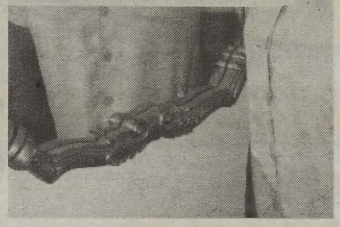
"Emotionally Scarred" is meant to be read aloud, according to the author, who divided the book's stories into monologues.

"That's so people can actually feel a little bit about what I was going through, even if it wasn't something that was part of their own experience," she explains.

When Williams-Dubois reads from her book during the Black Gay Pride Literary Café, she'll give listeners the feelings of an 80-year-old woman — a character Williams-Dubois introduces in "The Victim of Unending Prejudice."

"You wonder — just in the way she tells it — if she's telling the truth about some of the things she's seen," Williams-Dubois says.

TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT BLACK GAY EXPERIEnce is largely the focus of the literary arts portion of Black Gay Pride. And as much as that experience includes phenomena like the down low — which "The Down Low Diaries" author Eric Ware is scheduled to discuss — or the alienation black gay men and lesbians can face as "Not In My Family" author Gil Robertson can attest, there are also sweet triumphs.



Transgender author **Daphany Williams-Dubois** shares her life story alongside other notable authors at the Black Gay Pride Literary Café. (Photo by Zack Hudson)

Author and publisher Lisa C. Moore is scheduled to read from her "Voices Rising" anthology during the Literary Cafe, and local lesbian erotica author Fiona Zedde will share her "Every Dark Desire."

Moore also appears at Charis Books & More's Sept. 2 "Voices Rising: Celebrating 20 Years of Black, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Writing." That event also includes Atlanta contributors like Duncan Teague and Malik M.L. Williams, as well as contributor Reginald Harris and editor G. Winston James.

At Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse, more authors are scheduled to appear in conjunction with Black Gay Pride. Shonia Brown, editor of "Longing, Lust, and Love: Black Lesbian Stories," appears Aug. 31 with contributors Tanaine Jenkins, Ranair Amin and Claudia Moss. On Sept. 1, Outwrite hosts Stanley Bennett Clay and his steamy new novel "Looker."

MORE INFO

Black Gay Pride Literary Café
Sept. 1, 4 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Sheraton Atlanta,165 Courtland St.
$5 admission or free with festival pass

Voices Rising
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By MIKE FLEMING
mfleming@sovo.com

There are definitely times when fine dining fills the bill. But especially when you're grungy, tired and just hungry, nothing squelches hunger pains like a good burger.

Smoky, juicy, fattening and supersized with your personal perfect lineup of condiments, here are a just a few Atlanta restaurants serving burgers sure to leave you satisfied.

GEORGE'S: Tucked in the high-tone shopping district near the intersection of Virginia and Highland avenues, this bar and grill has seen changes in its surroundings in the last 46 years. But inside, it manages to maintain a neighborly, casual feel and a menu that's a step above bar food, but just as comforting.

On a different day, we'd recommend the perfectly prepared Reuben. But today, we're all about the humongous burgers. These gems take two hands and extra napkins, and come with fries or incredible onion rings that are among Atlanta's best.

Whether you just finished mowing the lawn, operating a crane, or even shopping in your finest clothes, welcome to George's. Slide into a booth, order a beer from the long list, and prepare to be satiated.

FIVE GUYS: What'll ya have? It's an easy question to answer at this super-fast counter chain that is scoring regulars in Buckhead, Edgewood and several 'burbs.

There isn't much time to decide as the busy crew scuttles about barking orders as they come up. But with a menu limited to burgers, dogs and fries, the choices are simple. Have your high-stacked burger or fat frank with cheese, bacon, or both. Easy enough?

The addictive skin-on fries arrive spilling out of their containers, and only the most arduous eater could finish an order alone. A nice array of complementary toppings includes the usuals as well as jalapeños, bell peppers, relish, fried onions and sautéed mushrooms.

Order up! Get back up there and sink your teeth into one of the fastest, juiciest burgers in town.

VORTEX: This Atlanta institution doesn't take any crap. In fact, it's partially known for the long list of rules printed on its menu declaring its Midtown and Little Five Points locations "Idiot Free Zones," and implicitly reserving the restaurant's right to mock stupid questions and kick your ass out.

The Vortex in Little Five Points

It's hilarious reading, but they're serious. Don't talk back, and everyone is welcome.

They get away with it because the food is fantastic, including signature burgers from plain jane to blackened to bleu cheese and beyond. If you can imagine it on a burger, a version is probably already on the menu. We recommend ordering yours with the amazing tater tots.

Both locations are loud, but the atmosphere in Little Five Points is maybe a little more raucous, including nights when diners must navigate a sea of motorcycles to get in the door framed by the mouth of a giant skull. Don't be scared, the atmosphere is part of the experience.

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Queen of Soul cancels, but Pride hosts more celebs

PLUMMER, continued from Page 1

that "Stella" wasn't grooving happily ever after. In June of that year, McMillan and Plummer's May-December marriage ended in a messy divorce after Plummer told McMillan that he is gay.

McMillan responded by telling Oprah Winfrey and anyone else who would listen that Plummer conned her by hiding his sexual orientation in order to marry into money and gain U.S. citizenship. In March, McMillan filed a $40 million defamation and extortion lawsuit against Plummer, whom she regularly refers to as a "faggot."

This weekend, Plummer brings his side of the story to Atlanta's Black Gay Pride festival as he kicks off a national book tour promoting his debut novel, "Balancing Act." Plummer also co-hosts In The Life Atlanta's "Family Feud" game show on Sept. 2.

"People realize that she wrote her story, and now this is a way of showing an alternative side of my story," Plummer tells Southern Voice.

Just as "Stella" was loosely based on McMillan's courtship with Plummer, many parts of "Balancing Act" harmonize with Plummer's real life.

The story centers around Justin Blakeman, a young Jamaican with "hazel-green eyes offset by dark chocolate skin" who catches the attention of Tasha Reynolds, a vacationing powerhouse modeling agent.

Tasha brings her Jamaican boy toy to America where the two of them engage in a "complex game of sexual desire and control" that is complicated further "when Justin discovers a hidden hunger for a male model," according to the promotional material put out by the book's publisher, Simon & Schuster.

The book is "fiction with a purpose, and it's a funny and sexy story," the author says of "Balancing Act," which he co-wrote with Karen Hunter. "It mirrors my life and it mirrors my coming out process, but the main character Justin Blakeman is a hero, and I don't really consider myself a hero."

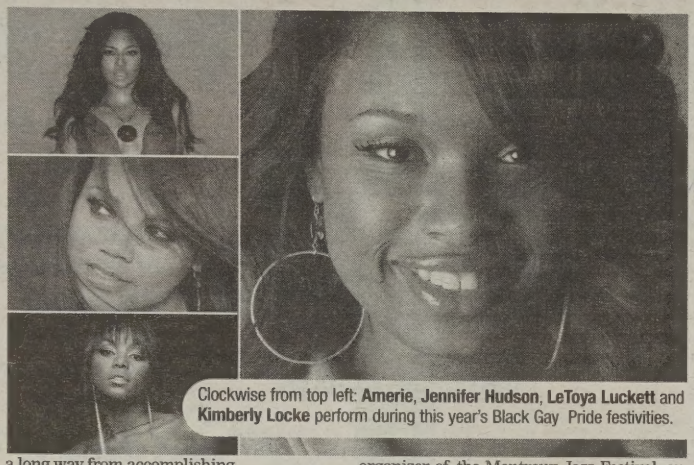
LINGERING SHADOWS The main character's acceptance of his sexual orientation is more immediate and honest than Plummer's real-life experience, which is why the author considers his protagonist a hero. Having transitioned from an icon of love to the epitome of deception, Plummer wants readers to know that while he's no angel, he's not the backstabbing, villainous liar McMillan has made him out to be.

"It really caught me off guard the way she responded and how bitter she is," Plummer says. "I came out, I wasn't found out, and I want people to know that. She's been telling a lot of people she caught me, but that's definitely not true — I decided to be truthful to her."

It took Plummer about two years to complete "Balancing Act." He crafted it as a piece of fiction rather than an autobiography with hopes of appealing to more readers — and because he isn't prepared to tell his life story, he says.

"I think I'm just a little bit too young for that yet," he says. "I've still got a lot to learn and a lot ahead of me."

Plummer yearns for the day when he escapes McMillan's shadow, something he is a long way from accomplishing.



Clockwise from top left: **Amerie**, **Jennifer Hudson**, **LeToya Luckett** and **Kimberly Locke** perform during this year's Black Gay Pride festivities.

McMillan also remains a kink in Plummer's love life.

"I'm dating, but it's rough," Plummer says. "People, their impression is like, 'Oh, you're Terry McMillan's ex-husband,' and there's a lot of baggage that comes with that. It's kind of hard because people don't really see me for who I really am; all they see is Terry.

"I'm a good, loving person, I think, and so hopefully people are ready to see me for who I am," he adds.

Plummer, who says his first sexual experience with a man was three years ago, is quickly settling into his identity as a gay man.

"It was a little scary at first, but the more [other gay men] started embracing me, then I felt comfortable," he says. "Coming out means honoring who you are on the inside, and I'm still coming out. I'm a work in progress."

QUEEN CANCELS Plummer is among a large roster of celebrities attending Black Gay Pride, but the entertainment lineup slimmed down last week when the "Queen of Soul" announced that she was canceling her Labor Day weekend concert at Chastain Park Amphitheatre. Aretha Franklin was scheduled to headline Atlanta's Montreux Jazz festival, and discount tickets were available to Pride attendees via ITLA, which organizes official events for Black Gay Pride.

Zandra Conway, an ITLA board member, said the organization will refund money to ticket holders who purchased seats through ITLA.

"It's disappointing, sure. It was a highlight of Black Gay Pride, and people were buying tickets for that who probably wouldn't attend a lot of the other events," Conway said.

Conway said the ITLA seats were selling briskly, but did not have an immediate estimate of how many tickets the group had sold to the now-canceled show.

In a press release to Atlanta news media, Franklin blamed the cancellation on the hot summer temperature. The 65-year-old musical legend canceled a performance at an outdoor venue in Detroit earlier this summer and cited high temperatures as the reason then.

Word of Franklin's decision reached the city of Atlanta's Office of Cultural Affairs, an organizer of the Montreux Jazz Festival, on Aug. 22, according to director Camille Love.

Early reports that Franklin's show was merely postponed are inaccurate, according to Love, who said that her office offered Franklin the use of the Atlanta Civic Center as a substitute for Chastain.

"We understood her concerns about her health and the temperatures. With respect to that, even though there was an air-conditioned stage at Chastain, we chose to offer her a different venue that was inside, air-conditioned, and comfortable in a great venue," Love explained.

Franklin declined. No alternate date — at least organized through the city — is scheduled.

OTHER CELEBS Celebrities still scheduled to attend this weekend's Black Gay Pride include Oscar-winner Jennifer Hudson performing at the Lion's Den party at Club Europe Sept. 2, and "American Idol" semi-finalist Kimberly Locke singing at the "Full Moon" party at the new Traxx on Sept. 1. R&B sensation Amerie takes the stage at the "Men R From Mars" party at Atlanta Live on Aug. 31.

Traxx Girls also brings a handful of stars to town for its weekend of parties for women. "America's Next Top Model" alumna Eva Pigford and Jade Cole host a Sept. 1 Traxx Girls block party in downtown Atlanta, the same night that the British R&B duo Floetry performs at Club Attraxxions.

Also on Sept. 1, Traxx Girls hosts its signature party at Atlanta Live, which almost 4,000 lesbians attended last year.

"I can only imagine what this year is going to be like — that evening is just bannoodles," says Melissa Scott, one of the organizers of Traxx Girls.

The Atlanta Live party features appearances by Tiffany "New York" Pollard from "Flavor of Love," "American Idol" castoff Frenchie Davis, and singer LeToya Luckett, formerly of Destiny's Child.

Traxx Girls' Sept. 2 party at Club Europe reserves the mic for local artists including the rap group Crime Mob, singer Spring, and Wanita "D-Woods" Woodgette, one of the sex kittens from the group Danity Kane.

Zack Hudson contributed to this article.

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Black Gay Pride events

FRIDAY, AUG. 31

ITLA Black Pride Marketplace
3 p.m.-all weekend
Sheraton Hotel, downtown
165 Courtland St.
www.inthelifeatl.com

Cocktails & Conversations w/ Girls in the Night
5-8 p.m.
Westin Peachtree Plaza
210 Peachtree St.

Yahzarah and **Kevin Bryant** are among the performers at In the Life Atlanta's opening ceremony on Friday night.

ITLA Opening Ceremony
8-10 p.m. at the Sheraton Hotel

Longing, Lust & Love book signing
8 p.m.
Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse
991 Piedmont Ave., 404-607-0082

ITLA Speakfire!
11:59 p.m.-3 a.m.
Sheraton Hotel

Manhunt Friday
10 p.m.-3 a.m.
Tower II, 735 Ralph McGill Blvd.

Blatino & Papi fest
10 p.m.-4 a.m.
Chaparral, 2715 Buford Hwy.

All Black Affair
10 p.m.-4 a.m.
Park Tavern, 500 10th St.

Party to the Max
10 p.m.-3 a.m.
Jungle
2114 Faulkner Road

ITLA 'House Vibes' dance party
11 p.m.-4 a.m.
Event Loft @ Underground Atlanta
50 Upper Alabama St.

Men R From Mars
Aug. 31
10 p.m.-6 a.m.
Atlanta Live, 3595 Clairmont Road

Women R From Venus
10 p.m.-5 a.m.
Club Miami, 3011 Buford Hwy.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 1

ITLA Living in Our Pride Health Expo
9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Sheraton Hotel

ITLA community luncheon
10:30 a.m.-noon
Sheraton Hotel

'A Total Eclipse' brunch
11 a.m.-2 p.m.
Attraxxions, 393 Marietta St.

State of Black Gay America Summit
11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Renaissance Atlanta Hotel
590 W. Peachtree St.

Pride Basketball Tournament
1-7 p.m.
Chastain Memorial Park
135 W. Wieuca Road

ITLA: A conversation with Jonathan Plummer
2-3 p.m. at the Sheraton Hotel

ITLA 'See Us in the Life' film festival
3-7:30 p.m. at the Sheraton Hotel

Fallacular Pride Party
3-8 p.m.
Joe's Crab Shack
2175 Cobb Parkway

Atlanta Wet! block party
3-8:30 p.m. at Attraxxions

Peaches & Cream hot body contest
3-8 p.m. at WETbar, 960 Spring St.

ITLA Literary Café
4-7 p.m. at the Sheraton Hotel

Glam Slam: Prelims
5-9 p.m. at the Westin Hotel

Atlanta's Life Line mixer
5:30 p.m.-midnight
Bryton Hill Clubhouse
2527 Skyland Dr.

Stanley Bennett Clay book signing
8 p.m. at Outwrite Bookstore

ITLA Poetry Slam
8-10 p.m. at the Sheraton Hotel

'Full Moon' party
10 p.m.-6 a.m.
Traxx, 1287 Columbia Dr.

12th Annual Girl Ball
10 p.m.-5 a.m.
Fox Theatre, 660 Peachtree St.

'Big Bang' girl party
11 p.m.-6 a.m., Atlanta Live

Magnum Saturday
10 p.m.-6 a.m.
Club 708, 708 Spring St.

ITLA Montreux After Dark
11 p.m.-4 a.m.
Event Loft @ Underground Atlanta

Bois Night Out party
10 p.m.-4 a.m., Playground South

'Solar Wind' grown folks party
10 p.m.-4 a.m. at Attraxxions

Meat Market party
10 p.m.-4 a.m.
Phase One, 4933 Memorial Dr.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 2

ITLA Interfaith worship service
10:30 a.m.-noon
Sheraton Hotel

Unity in the Park
11 a.m.-7 p.m. in Piedmont Park

Traxx Girls Brunch
11 a.m.-3 p.m. at Attraxxions

ITLA Jazz Brunch
Noon-3 p.m. at the Sheraton Hotel

Gospel Brunch
Noon-3 p.m.
The Sweet Down Low, 942 Peachtree

Glam Slam: Championships
5-9 p.m. at the Westin Hotel

'What My Name Iz?' comedy show
6-9 p.m. at Attraxxions

ITLA 'Living in our Pride' youth fashion show
8-10 p.m. at the Sheraton Hotel

Planet X party
9 p.m.-6 a.m. at Club Europe
4001 Presidential Parkway

Grown & Sexy party
7 p.m.-until
Django, 495 Peachtree St.

All White Affair
10:30 p.m.-4 a.m. at Park Tavern

Legendary Sunday
10 p.m.-3 a.m. at Chaparral

Mark Anthony's house party
10 p.m.-5 a.m.
3247 Kingston Road

My Girl Gotta Girlfriend party
10 p.m.-5 a.m. at Club Miami

Balenciaga Ball
11 p.m.-until at Traxx

MONDAY, SEPT. 3

ITLA Stand Up & Represent march
9:30 a.m.-noon
Gather at MLK Center
449 Auburn Ave.

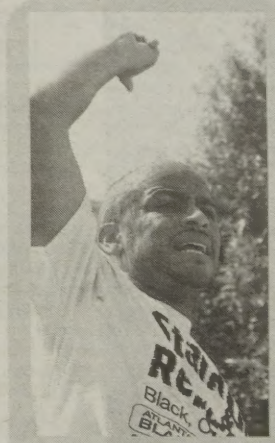
'Some Like it Hot' girl pool party
4-9 p.m.
Renaissance Atlanta Hotel

'Milky Way' white party
8 p.m.-3 a.m. at Fever Ultralounge
1789 Cheshire Bridge

Stars of the Century
10 p.m.-3 a.m. at Jungle

Dream 2007
10:30 p.m.-3 a.m.
Ice Lounge, 840 Marietta St.

Compiled by Ryan Lee



The 'Stand Up & Represent' march and rally on Labor Day caps ITLA's official Black Gay Pride events. (Photo by Bo Shell)

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Labor Day calendar packed with events for every taste

LABOR DAY, continued from **Page 29**

at the Loft, and special appearances from DJs Rick Walsh and Brian Beck at Heretic.

WETbar's "I Love the 80s" on Friday night features former New Kid on the Block Jordan Knight. WETbar's marketing director Arman Reyes says fans can expect a few numbers from Knight's NKOTB glory days, as well as numbers from his follow-up solo career.

WETbar's Saturday night features a look back at a time more recent, but nonetheless gone for good.

"We were recently graced by a visit from former Backstreet Atlanta owner Vicki Vara," he says, "and we were inspired to do a kind of throwback to the Backstreet days with a full-on DJ tag-team session featuring Bill Berdeaux and Rob Reum, two former Backstreet residents."

IN ADDITION TO THE NIGHTTIME PARTIES, Atlanta's Labor Day Weekend offers fun away from the gay party scene.

Gay tennis players from around the country converge on Atlanta for the Peach Tennis Tournament, and Lumberjack's, a gay campground in Unadilla, Ga., hosts a weekend of activities including drag legend Raven performing her infamous fire dance, once a staple of the Atlanta Pride stage.

Celebrants who are more bookish can take in a selection of gay authors at the Decatur Book Festival, including Edmund White and Fiona Zedde, all weekend in downtown Decatur. The Montreux Jazz Festival offers a chance to kick back and enjoy world-class music, and Team Gina leads the lesbian hip-hop revolution with the Heatwave Tour at Eyedrum.

Film buffs converge on the Starlight Six Drive-In for the weekend-long Drive Invasion, and alterna-queers join the crowds browsing comic book vendors and ogling sci-fi beefcake like "Battlestar Galactica's" Jamie Bamber at the annual Dragon Con and its parade in downtown Atlanta.

MORE INFO:

Decatur Book Festival
Aug. 31 – Sept. 2
Downtown Decatur, 678-436-3237
www.decaturbookfestival.com

The Peach Tennis Tournament
Aug. 31 – Sept. 2
See website for events and locations
www.atta.org

Lumberjacks' Labor Day Weekend w/Raven's fire show
Aug. 31 – Sept. 3
Lumberjacks Campground
50 Highway 230, Unadilla, 877-888-1688
www.lumberjackscampground.com

Dragon Con
Aug. 31 – Sept. 3
Hyatt Regency Atlanta, 265 Peachtree St. NE
www.dragoncon.org

Montreux Jazz Festival
Aug. 31 – Sept. 3
See website for events and locations
www.atlantafestivals.com

'Longing, Lust, and Love' w/ Shonia Brown and contributors
Aug. 31, 8 p.m.
Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse
991 Piedmont Ave., 404-607-0082
www.outwritebooks.com

'I Love the 80s' with Jordan Knight
Aug. 31, 10 p.m.
WETbar
960 Spring St., 404-745-9494
www.wetbaratlanta.com

'Grind' with the Court of Kings
Aug. 31, 11:30 p.m.
Masquerade, 695 North Ave. NE
www.myspace.com/courtofkings

Men's Night Cabaret
Aug. 31 & Sept. 1, 8 p.m.
Onstage Atlanta
2597 N Decatur Road, 404-897-1802
www.onstageatlanta.com

Drive Invasion
Sept. 1 – 2
Starlight Six Drive-In
2000 Moreland Ave.
www.driveinvasion.com

Team Gina, Athens Boys Choir and Katastrophe
Sept. 1, 8 p.m.
Eyedrum, 290 MLK Jr Drive SE Suite 8
404-522-0655, www.eyedrum.org

Chris Cox
Sept. 1, 10 p.m.
The Loft at Center Stage, 1374 W Peachtree St. NW
www.ovahproductions.com

Bill Berdeaux and Rob Reum
Sept. 1, 10 p.m.
WETbar

Passion with DJ VanCronkhite
Sept. 1, late night
The Body Shop
2675 Johnson Road NE
www.fruitcakeproductions.com

'Voices Rising'
Sept. 2, 6 p.m.
Charis Books & More, 1189 Euclid Ave
404-524-0304
www.charisbooksandmore.com

2-T-Fruity with Ralphi Rosario
Sept. 2, 6 p.m. – 3 a.m.
Fever, 1789 Cheshire Bridge Road
www.fruitcakeproductions.com

Labor Day Bar-B-Q
Sept. 3, 4 p.m. – 6 p.m.
Friends on Ponce
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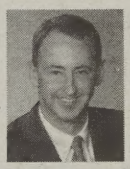

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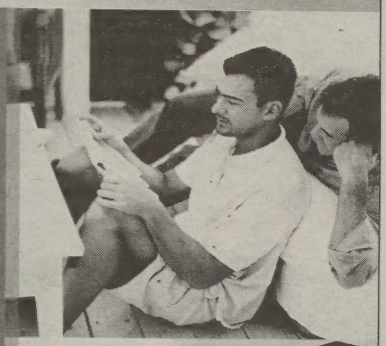

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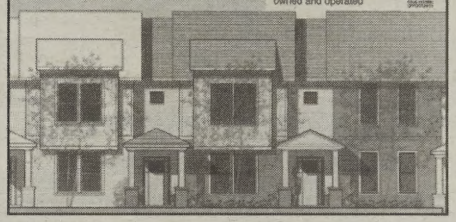

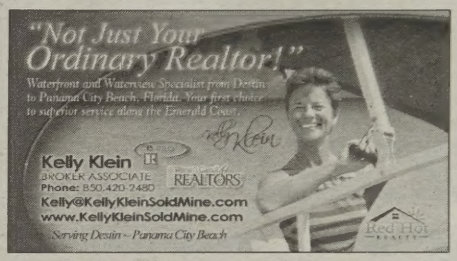
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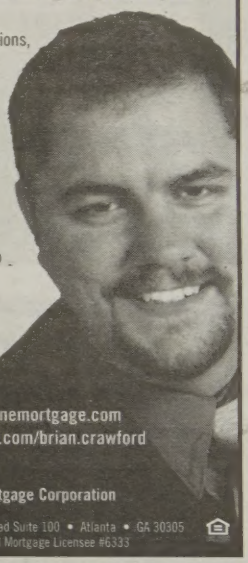

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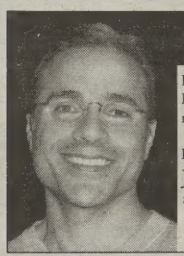

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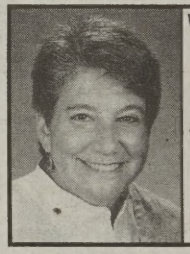

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Continued from page 35

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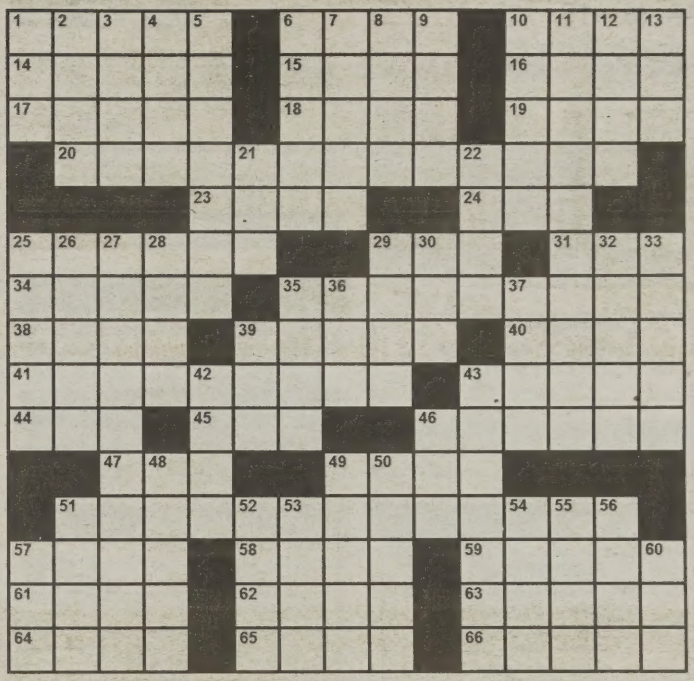
Q Puzzle: WHAT'S NU?



ACROSS

1. "Uh-oh!" of the Bard's day
6. Performed like a top
10. Peter I, for one
14. The No. 1 to Christopher Street
15. Painting and sculpture, to Michelangelo
16. Penetrating question?
17. Kind of dish
18. He cruised for 40 days straight
19. Ruck of "Spin City"
20. Crunchy sampler named for a gay poet?
23. End of a favorite holiday
24. U-turn from ENE
25. Like food that makes you spit
29. Sex orientation determiner, some say
31. Money back from Intl. Male
34. What you might lend Marc Antony
35. Complaint about a Gary Danko restaurant?
38. Result of getting rear-ended
39. Pissed
40. Added stipulations
41. Result of bed death?
43. Josh of "The Deep End"
44. Colette's king
45. A word from Verlaine
46. Homosexuality?
47. "Murder, ___ Meowed"
49. Cabbage, to Cocteau
51. Streisand song that bombed?
57. Heed a master
58. Coward of "Blithe Spirit"
59. Swashbuckling Flynn
61. "Marriage ___" (civil union, derogatorily)
62. Prepare for phone sex
63. Pop singer Cleo
64. Where to find Susie Bright's drawers
65. Atop
66. Billy Crudup's "___ Beauty"

DOWN

1. Mountain in "The Sound of Music"
2. MGM Studios co-founder Marcus
3. ___ fool (screw around)
4. Clergyman Bean
5. "M*A*S*H" cross-dresser
6. Vixen's master
7. They stick out in front of sailors
8. Place for Young men?
9. Old fruit drink
10. New York Liberty and Seattle Storm
11. River in the land of k.d. lang
12. ___ angle (not straight)
13. Turn tail
21. Grecian vessel
22. Christmas poem opener
25. Traffic cop's tool
26. Bridge bid, briefly
27. "Lets touch these," said Billie Jean
28. Russian singing duo
29. Pair in gay Paree
30. Barely beat
32. Come as far as
33. Like Albert, in "The Birdcage"
35. "___ Side Story"
36. Poem of Sappho
37. Romantic island for gay commitment ceremonies
39. "Alice" waitress
42. Sherman Hemsley religious sitcom
43. Crown leaves for Caesar
46. "Don't ___ step further!"
48. "Frida" star Salma
49. Spike for David Kopay
50. Greeting for Dolly
51. Award for Cherry Jones
52. Disengage, as a bra hook
53. Susan B. Anthony dollar, e.g.
54. "Nuts!"
55. Diva's piece
56. Foo ___ (Chinese omelet)
57. Gershick's "Gay ___ Girls"
60. Liberace's nickname

Answers on page 47

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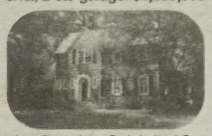

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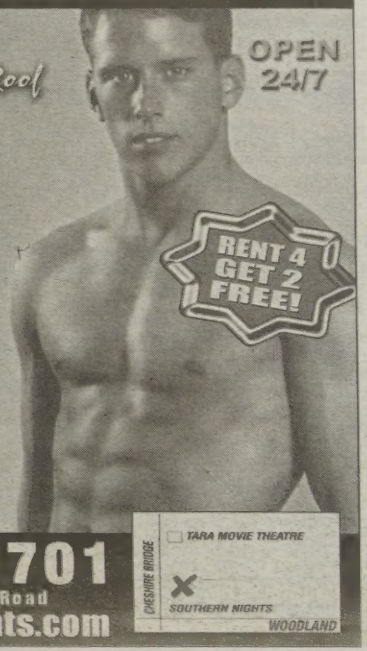

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WELL, I UH... HE! HE! YEA... UH. THANKS! I MEAN. WELL... UM... NICK'S... UH... HE'S BEEN REALLY... YOU KNOW... PUSHING ME. AT THE GYM, I MEAN.
I'LL SAY. SO WHERE IS OUR BOY, NICKY TONIGHT?
HE'S AT HOME WITH HALLS. I JUST... JUST WANTED TO GET OUT AND... YOU KNOW, SAY "HI". HEH! HEH! HI!
WELL I'M CERTAINLY GLAD YOU DID. BUT IF I WERE NICKY, I WOULDN'T LET YOU OUT OF MY SIGHT! IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
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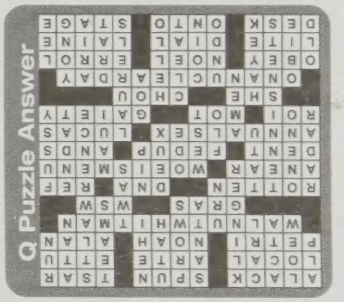

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POLITICAL LEADERS:
Familiar faces tapped to helm Georgia Equality.
Page 6

COUNTRY CLUB:
Jungle changes format in nightlife shake-up.
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Labor Gay Weekend

DJ VanCronkhite just one headliner on packed calendar for holiday weekend.
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BLACK GAY PRIDE 2007

The making of a mecca

Why Atlanta is America's black gay capital

By RYAN LEE
rlee@sovo.com

One of the defining elements of a mecca is its gravitational pull, its propensity to attract far away pilgrims.

Muslims are spiritually bound to visit Saudi Arabia's Mecca if they are able to do so in their lifetime, and the Wailing Wall draws Jewish worshipers to pray 24/7. The energy of fashion meccas like New York and Paris attracts aspiring designers, models, photographers and make-up artists from across the globe.

And during the 1960s and '70s, America's most prominent gay mecca emerged in the Bay Area of California, as thousands of men and women fled their small, closed-minded cities and towns, and trekked across the country hoping to find freedom and justice for all in San Francisco.

The evidence of Atlanta's status as a black gay mecca manifests this weekend as an estimated 60,000 tourists descend on the city for Black Gay Pride, which runs through Labor Day. The strength of the city's pull for black gay men and lesbians will be proven by how many of those 60,000 people don't return to their hometowns.

"When I came I was only supposed to be here for two weeks for vacation," recalled Duncan Teague, who visited a week before Labor Day in 1984, and has

Please see **MECCA** on **Page 10**

Jonathan Plummer

How Jonathan got his groove back

Controversial gay author, Oscar winner Jennifer Hudson highlight Pride entertainment line-up

By RYAN LEE
rlee@sovo.com

Ten years ago, millions of Americans were introduced to a sexy, smooth-talking, 20-something Jamaican named Winston Shakespeare in Terry McMillan's semi-autobiographical novel "How Stella Got Her Groove Back."

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Please see **PLUMMER** on **Page 38**

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Atlanta AIDS organizations brace for funding cuts

Hundreds could lose case management, mental and dental health services

By ZACK HUDSON
zhudson@sovo.com

An announcement predicting a second round of cuts to Ryan White CARE Act funding for metro Atlanta left activists and leaders within local AIDS service organizations reeling.

The federal Human Resources Services Administration's proposed cuts to the Minority AIDS Initiative budget of the Ryan White program, combined with attempts to reclaim federal money allegedly overpaid to Georgia, could add up to Atlanta losing nearly $1.7 million for 2008 and 2009 budgets.

"We've not experienced this sort of loss in funding before," said Jeff Graham, chair of the public policy committee of the Metropolitan Atlanta HIV Health Services Planning Council, which oversees distribution of Ryan White funds for the 22 counties making up the Atlanta Eligible Metropolitan Area.

Though the effect on individual agencies and service providers remains undetermined, Graham said that budgets for specific client services would take the most profound hits if the proposed MAI cuts are left in the 2008 federal budget.

The Atlanta EMA is also currently weathering a punitive reduction from other sections of its Ryan White allotment following a federal government decision, announced in December, to reclaim money it says it overpaid Georgia government agencies as a result of accounting errors.

Graham said the proposed cuts to the Minority AIDS Initiative would force the local council to remove $740,000 from drug reimbursement funds it pays to local AIDS service organizations.

Graham estimates about 430 people would lose or have reduced access to mental health services following the council's projected $190,000 cut to that service budget. And a $135,000 projected reduction in dental health funds — or about enough to pay a full-time dentist for a year — would result in about 450 fewer available appointments for HIV-positive patients who look to social services for their dental care needs.

LOBBYING UNDERWAY The U.S. Congress will begin voting on budget appropriations in September. Graham said he and a cadre of AIDS activists will lobby Congress — specifically Georgia's federal legislative delegation — until the last minute.

"These cuts will be very real next year if additional dollars are not appropriated by Congress. That's really the important message we need to get out," Graham said.

"Now is the time when people need to contact their members of Congress before they vote," he urged.

The local HIV care council estimates about 38,000 Georgians are living with HIV or AIDS. Of those, the council figures about 26,600 are living within the Atlanta EMA.

MAI funds are used to improve HIV-related health outcomes for racial and ethnic minority communities disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS and reduce HIV-related health disparities. The local HIV services council cites Georgia Department of Human Resources figures that estimate 85 percent of newly diagnosed HIV infections in 2005 were among communities of color.

The most likely alternative treatment venue for people with HIV who depend on social services will be indigent medical care through hospital emergency rooms, Graham said.

"And in Atlanta, that means Grady," he said, referring to the beleaguered Grady Health System, itself scrambling to stay afloat among well-documented financial woes.

Please see **AIDS FUNDING** on Page 8

Local AIDS activists including **Jeff Graham** and **Tracy Elliott** will head to Washington, D.C., to lobby congress against proposed cuts to Georgia's AIDS resource funding.

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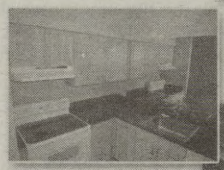

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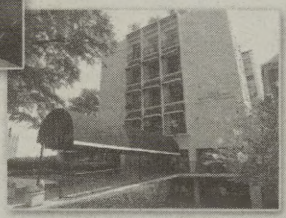

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Georgia Equality names new directors

Organization prepping for new strategy rollout

By ZACK HUDSON
zhudson@sovo.com

Nearing the end of a five-month huddle to scrutinize its mission and focus, Georgia Equality is emerging with three new staff members and a comprehensive strategic plan that the organization's directors plan to unveil in coming weeks.

Georgia Equality tapped Cathy Woolard and Kyle Bailey — two very familiar names within gay political circles — to lead the statewide gay political group as interim executive director and political director respectively.

In June, the organization hired Craig Strain as its development director, a position that coordinates fundraising efforts.

The announcement of the new staff returns Georgia Equality to the political and public spotlight after a hiatus while leaders hammered out the details of their new strategic plan, according to Kathleen Womack, chair of GE's political board.

"We've been doing a lot, but most of it's been behind the scenes," Womack said.

Womack has said one impetus of the regrouping time is a $10,000 Gill Foundation grant the organization received in December. Georgia Equality's boards of directors began meeting in March 2007 to fulfill the grant and prepare the new strategic plan.

The organization must adapt to the current Georgia political climate, which has changed drastically since Georgia Equality was founded during the mid 1990s, Womack explained.

"We had a Democratic majority then. We had lots of friends. And as things have changed, it seems that things are becoming more Republican, and less Democratic," Womack said of the situation the group's lobbyists and political consultants face.

Rethinking the organization's strategies is a move to increase its effectiveness.

"If we're only friends with Democrats, we're very rarely going to get anything done. It sounds very partisan, but that's just the reality of the situation," Womack said.

EXPERIENCED LEADERS Woolard currently works for Georgia Equality as a legislative lobbyist under independent contractor status. She will retain that position during her term as interim executive director of the organization. She will be the first replacement for Chuck Bowen, Georgia Equality's most recent executive director, who departed the organization in September 2006.

Womack praised Woolard's long-term commitment to gay rights causes.

"Cathy's been working on behalf of LGBT issues for at least 25 years, and we've been pleased with her work with us," Womack said.

Woolard became Georgia's first openly gay elected official in 1997, when she won election to the District 6 Atlanta City Council seat. In 2001, Woolard won a citywide election to become Atlanta City Council President, the first woman and the first openly gay person to hold the post.

She stepped down from the president's seat in 2004 to make an unsuccessful bid for a congressional seat that was eventually won by Cynthia McKinney.

Woolard could not be reached for comment by press time.

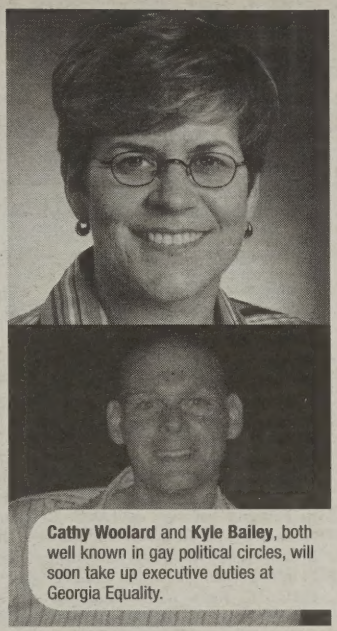
At 24, Kyle Bailey's youth belies his reputation as a swiftly rising star in Georgia Democratic Party politics. Bailey served a term as the chair and public face of the gay Atlanta Stonewall Democrats, and he helped lead the effort to get Jason Cecil, a gay man and Atlanta Stonewall Democrats treasurer, elected as president of the Young Democrats of Georgia.

Bailey worked as community relations director for YouthPride until Aug. 29.

"I think most people are excited to see someone who's both young and smart at the same time about strategy and Georgia politics," Bailey said, adding that he is "excited about the opportunity to work with Georgia Equality."

Strain began his service with Georgia Equality in a volunteer capacity, and was hired to work as the group's development director as an independent contractor.

Final negotiations over employment terms for Bailey and Woolard had not been completed by press time, though Womack confirmed that both Woolard and Bailey had accepted the positions offered by Georgia Equality.



Cathy Woolard and **Kyle Bailey**, both well known in gay political circles, will soon take up executive duties at Georgia Equality.

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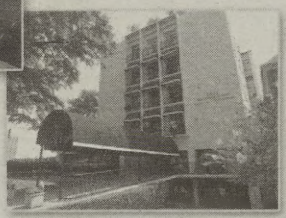

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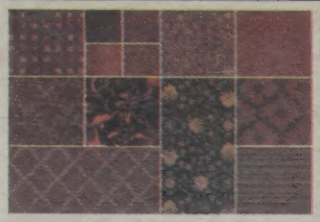

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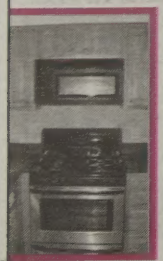

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Local AIDS groups to lobby Congress against funding cuts

AIDS FUNDING, continued from **Page 5**

Tracy Elliott, executive director of AID Atlanta, the largest AIDS service organization in Georgia, said his agency is prepping for any proposed cuts — from Ryan White funds or otherwise — by looking closer at private philanthropy to help make up its budget.

Elliott said that as a result of the proposed MAI cuts, his organization would likely take its biggest cut in case management funds, which he said would have an adverse effect on client services.

"We've known for some time that we would have to look elsewhere — simply for our survival," he said.

Out of an approximately $6 million annual operating budget, just over half of AID Atlanta's cash comes from federal and state grant payments. The organization brought in $1.4 million from its annual AIDS Walk fundraiser in 2006, on top of nearly $600,000 in private donations in 2006.

Elliott will join Graham and other local AIDS advocates on a lobbying trip to Washington, D.C., in September to address the MAI cuts and other issues.

Over at AIDS Survival Project, news of the MAI cuts is troubling, but not devastating, according to executive director Melanie Sovine.

"We're not bracing for that because we do not receive those funds," she said.

AIDS service organizations should prepare for uncertain financial times as a result of government funding because, as Sovine characterized it, the federal government has yet to fully fund HIV social and medical services since the creation of the Ryan White Care Act in 1990.

"The Ryan White Care Act has never — never means never — met the full financial needs of folks who depend on that public resource for care and treatment," she said.

"We're going backwards. It's not as if we've met our goal since 1990, and we're going backward before ever having met the goal," said Sovine, who has worked as a consultant on HRSA issues.

AIDS Survival Project depends on a diversified body of financial resources, according to Sovine. She added that the organization has recently been awarded $175,000 in new grant money.

A $150,000 grant from the Academy for Educational Development will pay for AIDS Survival Project to develop outreach offices in two as-yet-undetermined rural locations. The grant will also contribute to a public awareness campaign that preaches against anti-AIDS and HIV stigma.

Additionally, Sovine said that AIDS Survival Project was awarded a $50,000 grant from the Elton John AIDS Foundation — a full 100 percent increase over the last grant AIDS Survival Project received from the foundation.

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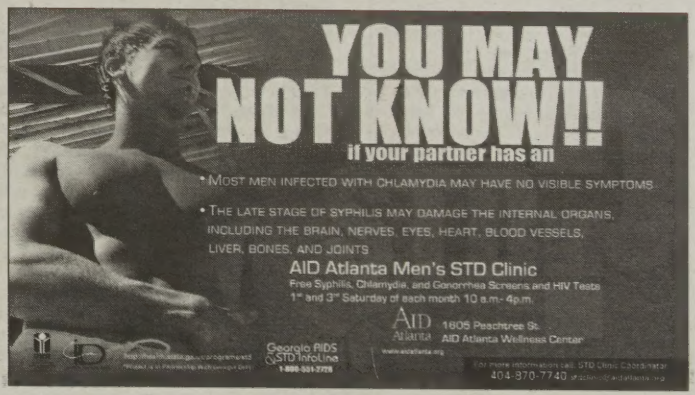
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ATL draws black gays from across the country

MECCA, continued from **Page 1**

called Atlanta home ever since.

Teague remembers attending his first black gay picnic that Labor Day weekend, then discovering that similar parties were taking place all over the city. He was awestruck by the performers and the size of the crowd inside the first gay club he visited.

"I thought, this must be all the black gay people in Atlanta, but lo and behold there was a line out the door and down Peachtree Street," Teague said. "All of these intelligent, sharp, middle class and above black gay men, and it was pretty amazing.

"Since the late '60s, Labor Day weekend, the place to come for that has been Atlanta," Teague added. "Now we host this great big celebration in Atlanta and that's not an accident."

Atlanta's black gay culture is so abundant that it spills over into every part of the city, from popular hangouts like Lenox Square mall, to Black Gay Pride being discussed and publicized on the city's No. 1 urban radio station.

"That's almost unheard of in other cities for Black Gay Pride to get a spot on a major radio station like V-103," said D'Lovely Gibson, who has lived here since 1994 and is a board member of In The Life Atlanta, the organizer of Black Gay Pride.

"When you see the number of people that come into this city for Black Gay Pride and how far and wide they're coming from, and when people go that far for a Pride in the a city, that really says a lot," she said.

NUMBERS & NIGHTLIFE

There are no concrete estimates about the number of black gay men, lesbians and transgender individuals live in metro Atlanta, but even city officials are fully aware of its reputation as a black gay mecca.

"We know that's one of the ways we're identified as a great vacation destination and for relocation," said Lauren Jarrell, director of communications for the Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau. "While we don't have any data to support being a black gay mecca, we do know we're the No. 1 city for African-American travelers, and a popular destination for gay travelers as well."

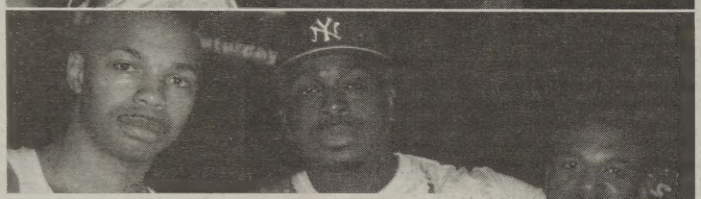
Once those tourists arrive in town, no one can show them a party — more accurately, parties — like the ATL.

"If you visit Atlanta and don't have a good time you don't know what you're doing — that's across the board, but especially for black folks," Teague said.

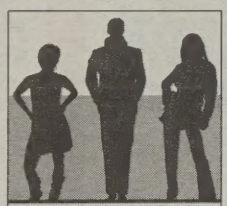
This weekend, out-of-towners are likely to encounter breathtaking expanses of black gay revelers at nightclubs like Traxx, Club Europe and Tower II. The buffet of parties Atlanta offers over holiday weekends like Labor Day and Martin Luther King's birthday is just a sampling of what the city offers year round.

"There is definitely something to do every night of the week," said Donte Smith, who begins rattling off the weekly line-up with ease: the Monday night show at Jungle, Thugged Out Tuesday at Traxx, the mini balls at Club 708 on Wednesdays, and so on.

An Augusta native, Smith "knew Atlanta was an excellent party area" when he moved here after leaving the military, but said he's discovered much more.



Abundant nightlife and social opportunities, like Tuesday night's packed house at Traxx, are among the factors drawing black lesbians and gay men to Atlanta. (Photos by Bo Shell)



BLACK GAY PRIDE 2007
Events calendar, Page 39

"Atlanta offers us a lot of opportunities that we typically won't find elsewhere," Smith said. "It gives us a lot of areas to just develop and grow, particularly with our own businesses."

Still, for decades Atlanta's black gay nightlife has been what separates it from other cities.

"In the mid-'80s, we had a whole lot of black gay nightclubs and some were run by black folks, which is unique," Teague said. "What people experienced in their hometown was going to the white club on the black night, but here black night is every night of the week."

Atlanta native Shonia Brown came out as lesbian about 15 years ago, and in that time she's seen her hometown Pride evolve beyond the nightlife into what's touted as the largest Black Gay Pride in the country.

"There's been a lot of change, and a lot of things offered to young African Americans today weren't necessarily around when I was younger," said Brown, a local author and founder of Nghosi Books. "When the Black Gay Pride celebration first started, it was more of a party, barbecues, picnics, clubs — things like that. But now it's an official, organized event where we can have workshops, along with different entertainment events like spoken-word poetry and book signings."

MECCA OF OPPORTUNITY

Mario Harris is up front about what made him relocate from Milwaukee, Wis., to Atlanta six years ago this Labor Day weekend.

"It's always been a thing of boys, boys, boys," Harris said with a hearty laugh. "When I came for Pride six years ago it was the first time I ever came — and I stayed. I was pretty much like, 'Oh my god, I love this and I'm not going anywhere.'"

Not only did Harris dread returning to Milwaukee's non-existent gay nightlife, but he didn't go back to a city where being a successful black man meant being a postman or punching the clock at a factory job. Within a year of settling in Atlanta, Harris launched his own marketing and party promotions company — WassupnATL — and has since rubbed elbows with black restaurant owners, leaders of Fortune 500 companies like Coca-Cola and the popular playwright Tyler Perry.

Harris also has many friends who sold their homes in Los Angeles, New York and Chicago in order to live more affordably and abundantly in Atlanta.

"It's a huge step to come to Atlanta, where you get more house for your money, great opportunities, economic empowerment and growth, and then also they get to enjoy the type of social life Atlanta allows," Harris said.

Dee McClendon just bought his first condo in Atlanta's West End neighborhood after moving from Chattanooga, Tenn., in January. After eight months in the city, McClendon is still bursting with excitement.

"I wouldn't trade this for anything in the world," McClendon said. "I fucking love it here, this is my mecca, and I'm going to make her to be the most outstanding bitch that I can make her!

"The only thing I knew about Atlanta from my younger experience was partying," McClendon added. "But now, it's more opportunity, and they have a lot of things going on, especially for people living with HIV and AIDS — it's a lot of support."

Part of what makes black gay Atlanta so unique is that it's not monolithic or confined to the clubs, Gibson said. The city has social circles for black gay folks living with HIV, for singles and couples, for tennis players and wine lovers, Gibson discovered after exploring more of Atlanta.

"You could see that you didn't have just one or two places [for socializing] — you've got to make choices now because you've got dozens," Gibson said.

GROWING PAINS

When earlier generations of black gay men and lesbians arrived in Atlanta, many were eager and uninhibited about building a black gay infrastructure.

"We started forming new organizations for all these newcomers, and we could afford to be very out here because we weren't at home," Teague said.

In addition to ITLA, Atlanta is home to numerous black gay organizations, from HIV/AIDS groups like the National AIDS Education & Services for Minorities and Atlanta's Life Line, to social and discussion groups like Second Sunday, Affair With Flair and ZAMI, a group for lesbians of African descent.

But there are signs that Atlanta's black gay mecca hasn't yet materialized completely. Despite the thousands of black gay people who will party in Atlanta this weekend, no more than 200 have ever turned out for the "Stand Up & Represent" march that takes place on Labor Day. And it is difficult to get a sense of the size of Atlanta's black gay population — or its major issues — in many of the city's leading gay organizations.

On Sept. 1, two of Atlanta's top black gay party promotion companies team up with longtime activists to try to stimulate awareness and action by hosting a "State of Black Gay America" summit.

"The gay summit is us trying to have some more community-based events," said Terrance Mcgee, an organizer with Xtreme Entertainment. "We really feel there's no one out there in the black gay community fighting for our rights."

McClendon has observed other shortcomings in his brief time in Atlanta.

"We have just a few more things that need to be touched on here in the city," he said. "You know, the religion thing, the blacks are not taking caution of what they do [sexually] and you have ... homeless kids."

Black gay Atlanta still has some growing to do, but it's already come a mighty long way, Teague said.

"I wish we could live up to the reputation we have," Teague said. "There is a community here — it's not perfect and we don't have all of the institutions we need, but that's because we haven't built them, not because we couldn't.

"If you are a black gay person here in Atlanta, you can, if you want, build a black gay life here and not have every obstacle in your way," Teague added. "There will be some challenges, but it won't be Omaha."

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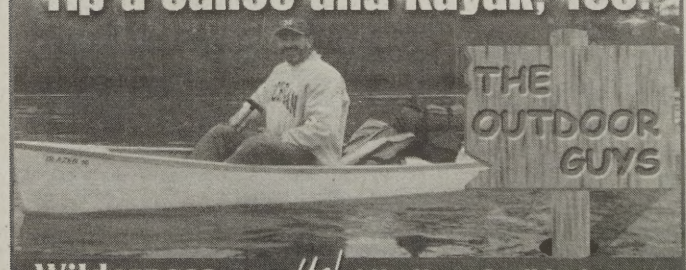

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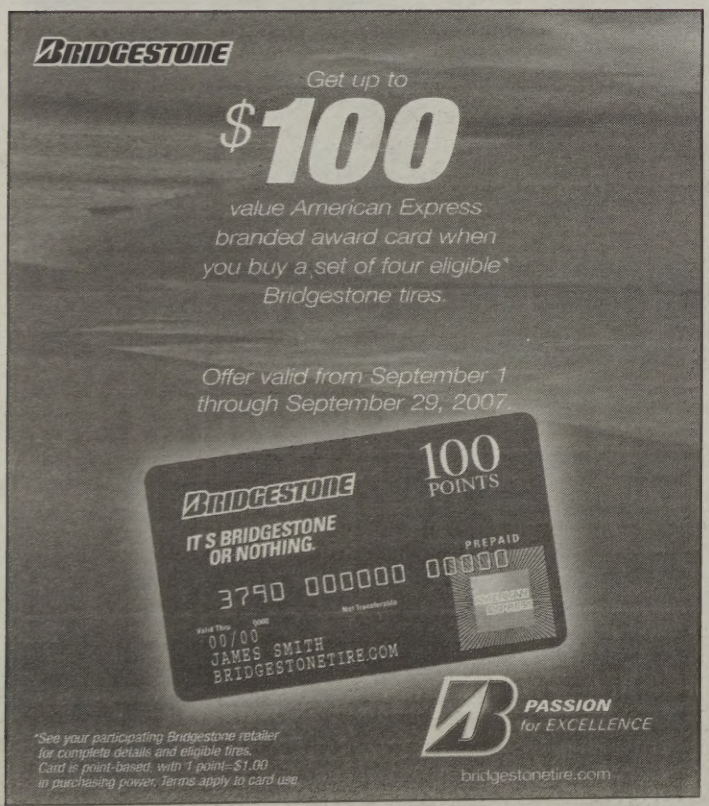
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SoVo ATLANTA NEWS BRIEFS

SoVo writers win national gay journalism awards

Southern Voice senior reporter Ryan Lee went to San Diego on Thursday to accept the 2007 Sarah Pettit Memorial Award for Excellence in the LGBT Press. Presented by the National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association, the award is the highest honor given to a writer in the gay press.

The Pettit award "is intended to recognize the outstanding contributions of a single journalist to the LGBT media landscape," according to NLGJA, an organization of gay journalists and other media professionals that cites 1,300 members.

An NLGJA judge described Lee's articles as "the best entries in the competition," noting that "Each had an interesting angle and a narrow focus. Very solid journalism."

Lee joined the Southern Voice staff in August 2003 after interning with the paper as a student at Auburn University.

"The stories and people of gay Atlanta make it easy and enjoyable to do interesting writing," he said. "I'm excited to be able to tell some of our stories — particularly the ones that don't get told elsewhere like HIV/AIDS, anti-gay discrimination and black gay life — and am honored to be recognized by my queer peers."

SoVo reporter **Ryan Lee** won the 2007 Sarah Pettit Memorial Award for Excellence in the LGBT Press

The award was to be presented Aug. 30 at the fourth annual LGBT Media Summit, part of NLGJA's national conference in San Diego.

"We are very proud of Ryan and the recognition he has brought to himself and to Southern Voice," said Bob Gunby, publisher of SoVo and David Magazine, where Lee also serves as deputy editor.

Mark King, a freelance writer for Southern Voice, also took first place in Opinion/Editorial writing in NLGJA's annual awards for his column, "When we were heroes." An NLGJA judge described the column as "a powerful piece of writing that reminds us all of the dark and dreaded days when AIDS was a death sentence."

King said he was "blown away" by the award. "I wrote 'When We Were Heroes' because I'm amazed at how mundane life can seem today, in contrast to the daily horrors of AIDS in the 1980s, and the incredible courage so many of us displayed then," he said. "I'm proud of the man I was during those times. I'd like to think I could be that courageous again, but who knows what our future lives will require of us?"

A former staffer at AID Atlanta, King later moved to Florida and now is in the process of moving to Quebec City, Canada, to live with his partner. He is working on a novel about the impact of crystal meth on gay men.

— Laura Douglas-Brown

Popular drag king, activist injured in motorcycle accident

MORE INFO
We Love PeeWee
www.myspace.com/welovepeewee
welovepeewee@gmail.com

Melvin Arundelli, also known to many in Atlanta's queer community as PeeWee, was seriously injured in a motorcycle accident in the early morning hours of Aug. 23 and is currently in critical but stable condition at Grady Hospital.

Melvin, a.k.a. **PeeWee**

"He's had a feeding tube implanted and is fighting off an infection," said friend Jamie Fergerson, who is helping keep Arundelli's status updated on a "We Love PeeWee" Myspace page devoted to keeping people informed about his condition.

"We are all amazed how well the community has come together and he would have done the same," Fergerson said. "There has been a wonderful outpouring of love and concern."

Fergerson noted also that Arundelli is receiving top-knotch care by the doctors, nurses and social workers at Grady Hospital.

"He is receiving phenomenal care, especially toward transgender issues. They have been amazing taking care of him and taking care of us," said Fergerson.

Since Arundelli was admitted into the hospital, friends and loved ones have gathered daily at the hospital to show support to him and his family as well as offer support to each other, Fergerson added.

Arundelli does not have health insurance and numerous fundraisers are being held to offset medical costs. People can also make donations to his medical fund through MondoHomo's website at www.mondohomo.com.

To date, approximately $2,000 has been raised through efforts by people including GiGi Monroe, the Court of Kings and the Femme Mafia as well as individuals.

Check donations can be made out to "MondoHomo" and mailed to PeeWee c/o MondoHomo, 251 Tye St. SE, Atlanta, GA 30316. Also, cash donations are being accepted at Charis Books & More, 1189 Euclid Ave. NE.

— Dyana Bagby

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SOVO NATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

Rev. Jane Spahr

Minister guilty of violating Presbyterian law for officiating at gay weddings

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A Presbyterian minister was found guilty of violating church law for officiating the weddings of two lesbian couples, the minister's defense team said last week. A regional judicial committee of the Presbyterian Church (USA) ruled 6-2 that while Rev. Jane Spahr of San Rafael "acted with conscience and conviction," her actions were still at odds with the church's constitution, her defense team said in a statement. The ruling, delivered late Aug. 23 to lawyers for Spahr and the church, reversed a lower court's decision in March 2006 that found Spahr acted within her rights as an ordained minister when she married the couples in 2004 and 2005. Spahr was the first minister of her faith to be tried for officiating the weddings of gay couples. She has since retired.

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POLITICS

Foley not likely to be charged in page scandal

WASHINGTON — Former Congressman Mark Foley (R-Fla.) is unlikely to face criminal charges for sending sexually explicit e-mails to teenage boys, sources close to the year-long investigation have told Scripps Howard News Service, which broke this latest report last week. That could change if new evidence surfaces that proves Foley, 52, sent online messages to male teenagers with the intent to "seduce, solicit, lure, entice or attempt to seduce a child," a third degree felony under Florida law, the service said. But for now, the end of Foley's political career may be the most severe consequence the former congressman faces for the revelations that stunned his longtime supporters and prompted his immediate resignation, just weeks before the 2006 election. The Fort Pierce Republican represented parts of St. Lucie, Martin, Okeechobee and Palm Beach counties. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement said last week the investigation should be completed within the next several days.

INTERNATIONAL

Nigerian men spared death as sodomy charges reduced

OSHODI, Nigeria — A group of 18 Nigerian men standing trial on homosexual charges, which are illegal in the country, avoided death sentences last week in a Bauchi State Sharia court, when the charges were reduced to idleness and "possession of female dressings," the Daily Champion, a Nigerian newspaper, reported. In Nigeria, these charges carry penalties of one year in jail and 20 strokes of the cane each. An angry mob of people gathered at the court protested the reduction in sentence and threw stones at police demanding the men be released for what some called "instant justice." Some in the crowd said the men desecrated the Islamic religion as all 18 men on trial are Muslim, the paper said. Several cars near the court were smashed. Had the initial charges of sodomy stuck, the men could have been hanged by Bauchi State Sharia law. Five of the men were released on bail. The others were kept in jail, according to a BBC report. A trial for the reduced charges is on hold while prosecutors research the case. The charges stem from an incident two weeks prior in which the men were arrested in a hotel room while dressed in women's clothes.

— From staff and wire reports

Craig arrest puts spotlight on bathroom sex

Anti-gay Idaho senator's case captivates, baffles national media

By LOU CHIBBARO JR.

News this week that Republican U.S. Sen. Larry Craig of Idaho had been arrested and pleaded guilty to a disorderly conduct charge for allegedly seeking a sexual encounter in an airport restroom has triggered yet another congressional sex scandal with possible implications for the 2008 elections, according to advocates for both major parties.

Craig, who declared in a press conference on Tuesday, "I am not gay and never have been gay," became an instant news media sensation, generating public discussion on the topics of gay sex in public restrooms and undercover police efforts to crack down on such activity.

Police at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport said an undercover officer arrested Craig June 11 in a men's public restroom after he made non-sexual gestures inside a stall with his hands and feet that police said suggested he was soliciting the officer for a "lewd act." Police said they sent the officer to the restroom in response to complaints by the public.

Craig has denied he was seeking sex in the restroom and has insisted police misunderstood his gestures, including the sliding of his foot into an adjacent stall so that it touched the foot of the plainclothes officer.

According to police, Craig stated that "he has a wide stance when going to the bathroom and that his foot may have touched mine," the arresting officer wrote.

By Wednesday, three Republican senators called for Craig's resignation and GOP Senate leaders removed him from senior committee positions. Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney quickly removed Craig's name from the Romney-for-president website, where he was listed as chair of Romney's campaign in Idaho.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) joined other GOP Senate leaders in calling for an ethics committee investigation into Craig's conduct.

But Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), one of two openly gay members of Congress, said Craig should be allowed to finish the remainder of his term, which ends January 2009, and have the option to go before Idaho voters in the 2008 election.

"What he did, it's hypocritical, but it's not an abuse of his office in the sense that he was taking money for corrupt votes," Frank told the Associated Press.

Gay activists were quick to point to Craig's long record opposing gay civil rights legislation in his career of more than 20 years as a congressman and senator, including his vote in 1996 against a bill to ban employment discrimination against gays.

He voted twice for a proposed constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage and has expressed opposition to allowing gays to serve openly in the military.

"Senator Craig is the latest in a string of public officials who have yet to learn that the days of treating Congress as a game of charades where you say one thing and do another are over," said Joe Solmonese, president of the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest gay civil rights organization.

Other gay activists, while saying they don't condone public sex, expressed concern that Craig's current predicament was brought about, in part, by the type of police sting operation that gays have long criticized as abusive and unnecessary.

Sean Kosfsky, director of policy for the Triangle Foundation, a Michigan-based gay advocacy group that monitors law enforcement issues, said it was ironic that an anti-gay politician like Craig became ensnared in a police operation that appears to be unfairly targeting mostly closeted gay or bi men

Kosfsky and other activists have called on police to deploy uniformed officers to discourage and, if necessary, make arrests in cases where public sex is a problem. They have argued that sting operations, which critics call "entrapment" schemes, are unnecessary and rarely result in stopping the problem of public sex or sexual solicitation.

"Senator's Craig's arrest was one of thousands of these arrests that take place across the country each year," Kosfsky said.

U.S. Sen. **Larry Craig** (R-Idaho) insists he's not gay. (Photo by AP)

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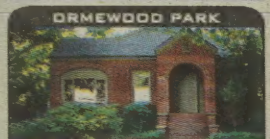

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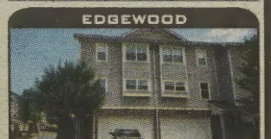

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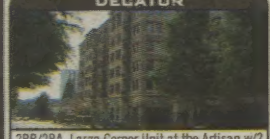

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LEAD & FOLLOW

U.S. Sen. Larry Craig (R-Idaho) has gotten himself into a bit of a pickle.

It appears the senator was seeking sex in the Minneapolis airport restroom (he claims he was trying to pick up a piece of paper) when an undercover police officer thought he was asking for, er, a hand. He was arrested and pleaded guilty to lewd conduct, paid a fine and is on probation.

In a press conference this week, Craig insisted he is not gay. His anti-gay voting record apparently is supposed to be proof of that.

With Craig up for re-election this year, Idahoans should take the **LEAD** and vote him out of office — not because he may or may not be gay, but because of his outright hypocrisy.

And while GOP leaders are calling for an ethics investigation into Craig, they should **FOLLOW** their own example and call for an investigation into Sen. David Vitter (R-La.), who last month acknowledged he committed "a very serious sin in my past."

That "sin" was paying for sex with the "D.C. Madam" — the senator's phone number was found in her little black book.

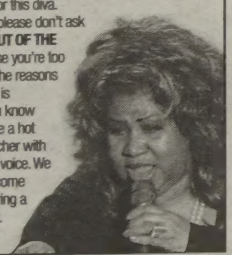
The National Lesbian & Gay Task Force points out that, despite the sin, Vitter received "thunderous applause" from Senate GOP colleagues during a policy lunch held a few days after his admission.

You guys can't have it both ways.

GET OUT OF THE WAY

We were thrilled a few weeks ago to learn Aretha Franklin was headlining Atlanta's Montreux Jazz Festival this weekend, with special group rates given to people visiting from all over the world for Black Gay Pride.

But when the Queen of Soul canceled last week due to the heat — even after the city offered her a different, indoor venue — we lost a little R-E-S-P-E-C-T for this diva.



Honey, please don't ask us to **GET OUT OF THE WAY** because you're too hot. One of the reasons we love you is because you know how to make a hot night a scorcher with your mighty voice. We hope you'll come back. And bring a fan with you.

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Ex-gay tools

By LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN

CHARLENE COTHRAN IS A TOOL.

Not in the colloquial sense, though some might think she is that too, but in the literal sense: The former Atlanta resident, who now also considers herself a former lesbian, has become a tool of the religious right.

Last week, Americans for Truth About Homosexuality — one of the most rabidly anti-gay organizations in the country — announced a date change for its first annual banquet, with Cothran as one of two keynote speakers for the October event.

The missive came just days after lesbian and gay Atlantans, backed by the Human Rights Campaign's Religion & Faith Program, released a YouTube video designed to counter a YouTube clip of Cothran's July appearance on Pat Robertson's "The 700 Club."

"Charlene's change and her decision to go public was a shock and a betrayal to everyone who knew her in the GLBT world. The African-American GLBT leadership in Atlanta felt that a response was needed," according to the group, represented in the video clip by Rev. Kathi Martin and Duncan Teague.

The response video targets people who might also feel as lonely as Cothran claims she was as a lesbian, with Martin and Teague stressing that there are resources and support for spiritually oriented gay people that do not require them to suppress their sexual orientation.

Watching Cothran on "The 700 Club," Martin says in the HRC video, "I almost felt like she was a victim, and we ended up becoming victims by extension."

Martin kindly argues that Cothran is a victim of "bad Biblical interpretation," but that doesn't go quite far enough.

The local activists are absolutely right that a response is needed, but the betrayal goes way beyond people who knew Cothran or Venus Magazine, the black gay and lesbian publication she founded here in 1995 and has now converted into an ex-gay tome.

By allowing themselves to be used at fundraisers by far-right conservative groups, many of which also expound views that are racist and sexist, Cothran and other prominent ex-gays hurt everyone who believes in equality and justice.

MANY OF THE ACTIVISTS INVOLVED WITH THIS weekend's Black Gay Pride celebration in Atlanta may be familiar with Cothran, Venus Magazine, or Venus Landin, the local activist for whom the magazine was named. A "history" section on the Venus website even lists Cothran as a co-founder of In The Life Atlanta, the group that sponsors official activities for Labor Day Weekend's Black Pride festivities.

Cothran founded Venus Magazine as a tribute to her friend, a black lesbian and key Atlanta organizer who was murdered in a domestic violence incident in 1993.

But last year, Cothran said she experienced a religious calling to change her sexual orientation, leading her to attempt a similar conversion on Venus — to the outrage of many of the magazine's former readers and supporters.

She's made headlines in gay and Christian media ever since, including her appearance last month on "The 700 Club," where her story was praised as "amazing" by host Pat Robertson — the same Pat Robertson who predicted hurricanes and "possibly a meteor" as God's wrath on tolerating homosexuality, said feminism will make women kill their children

After a summer filled with headline-grabbing 'former' homosexuals, ATL activists take matters — and video cameras — into their own hands.

and turn lesbian, and opposed for years an end to racial injustice in apartheid South Africa.

And the renewed attention to Cothran's alleged conversion is only the latest salvo in a summer filled with ex-gay news, with more reportedly coming.

Back in May, the ironically named Parents & Friends of Ex-Gays & Gays filed a federal lawsuit hoping to force Virginia's Arlington County School District to allow its fliers to be distributed to high school students. A settlement reached last month could allow the group to submit its fliers for distribution to elementary and middle-school students.

Supporters of ex-gay conversion therapy also earned press coverage this summer with news that the American Psychological Association was starting to review the group's 10-year-old policy that opposes counseling that considers being gay a mental illness, but does not explicitly condemn ex-gay "reparative" therapy.

Meanwhile, a few renegade researchers who advocate ex-gay therapy are reportedly hard at work on studies of their own. According to their opponents at Ex-Gay Watch and Truth Wins Out, researchers plan to release the results of "The Thomas Project," a five-year study of participants in the ex-gay Exodus Ministries, later this year.

Ex-Gay Watch charges the study used a small sample and relied only on self-reports of conversions; Truth Wins Out is urging media to ignore any study that does not use some sort of quantitative science — such as an MRI that can detect brain changes when lying — to tell if the participants are telling the truth about their attractions and sexual orientation.

NONE OF THIS WOULD BE TERRIBLY DISTURING if the "ex-gays" would keep their conversions to themselves. In some ways, the renewed focus on ex-gay testimonies and research in the last few months could even be considered a sign of progress.

Desperate times call for desperate measures, as the saying goes, and those who stridently oppose equal rights for gay Americans are swimming against a rising tide. From polls that show young voters supporting gay rights at record numbers, to all of the Democratic presidential candidates supporting civil unions for gay couples, signs abound that we are winning the battle for public opinion.

It makes sense, then, that social conservatives would want to cloak their shrill opposition to even the most basic civil rights protections in feigned compassion for individual "ex-gays."

It's disappointing, however, that people like Cothran — who ought to know better — would fall for it.

In the YouTube response video released Aug. 15, Martin challenges viewers to realize that "it's not about who you love, but how you love. ... Are you loving honestly? Are you being just?"

That's the problem with Cothran's decision to expand her "ministry," as she now describes Venus on a page of the magazine's website seeking donations.

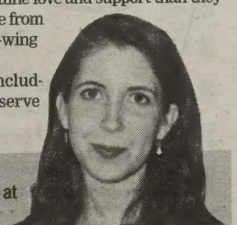
It's not intellectually honest to call yourself delivered from homosexuality when what you have actually achieved, by your own admission, is celibacy where you are "too busy" to be attracted to anyone — "men or women."

And it's not just to sell out your story to extremists like Pat Robertson and Americans for Truth, whose records suggest they are motivated more by politics than compassionately ministering to gay people or other minorities.

As I've written before, I have nothing against people who are so unhappy that they would rather choose to stop acting on their sexual identity than find a way to embrace it in the context of their spiritual beliefs.

The problem comes when these people, who often readily acknowledge that they have not been able to completely change their attractions, attempt to export their personal decisions to an entire community — one that offered them more genuine love and support than they will ever receive from their new right-wing benefactors.

All of us, including Venus, deserve better.



Editor **Laura Douglas-Brown** can be reached at **lbrown@sovo.com**

soap box

SOUTHERN VOICE

School Board Meeting Today
I PROPOSE THAT WE BAN GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES ON THE GROUNDS THAT THEY DISCRIMINATE AGAINST LESBIANS, BISEXUALS, AND TRANSGENDERS!
THAT OUGHT TO KEEP THE ACLU OUT OF IT!
e-mail: EditorialCartoon@gaynickoth.com ©2007

To read the articles that inspired these comments from readers, or to submit your own comments on the gay issues of the day, visit **www.sovo.com** and click **Sound Off**.

Blame Mayor Franklin for Midtown crime woes

Re concerns over Midtown security efforts (letters and Soapbox, Aug. 10-24):

Your readers are correct that there clearly is an irresponsible party in terms of keeping Midtown safe, but it's not the Midtown Ponce Security Alliance. Citizens don't take to patrolling the neighborhoods when the job is being done by the police. So when you look for your villain, you need to move further down the street and knock on Mayor Franklin's door. The discussion should be less about the MPSA and more about a fundamental failure of the APD to do get the job done.

Shirley Franklin (Photo by AP)

Midtown should temper security with compassion

Re "Gay group hopes to counter Midtown security tactics," (news, Aug. 17):

For the last few weeks I have read one article after another about the Midtown Ponce Security Alliance and thought Southern Voice might be overreacting. Then on a recent morning on my way to work, I saw the MPSA guy mistreat one of the prostitutes at the Exxon station on Ponce de Leon Avenue. The convenience store clerk had locked the door to clean the cooler or go to the bathroom. At the same time a prostitute wanted to go in the convenience store for something and of course found the door locked. The MPSA guy in the truck… just condescendingly told her that "nobody wants you around here" and "people in the neighborhood don't want to see you any more."

I commented to the MPSA guy about how he could be a little more compassionate. He just brushed me off and told me that "running her off" is the only option for "getting rid of her used condoms and needles." I see her often on Ponce day and night. She is a white woman who speaks with a strong southern accent. She appears to be about 50 years old. She tried to get into the car with me one time so she is obviously a prostitute. And she is not well emotionally and physically.

I don't want prostitution in my neighborhood, and I would not trust this woman, but where is the compassion? This woman is probably shell-shocked from growing up with domestic abuse, neglect and violence; ran away as a teenager only to find exploitation; and now has nowhere to run because the system doesn't have anything to offer and the judgmental gentrifying neighborhood only has cheers for her arrest.

There is no love and friendship on the mean streets of Ponce and Boulevard, only crack. And this will be this woman's world until she winds up as a Jane Doe in a potters field somewhere. This is very difficult for rich Midtown yuppies to relate to.

How about a gay bar for manly gay men?

Re "Hoedowns shuttered" (news, Aug. 17):

Another "Gay Atlanta" icon has bit the dust and quite honestly, I could give a crap that Hoedowns has closed their doors — that's what happens when you run a business and get greedy. I used to enjoy it on occasion. The new cover charge I could live with, but after I heard they incorporated drag into the bar I knew I'd never go back. Not everyone in the gay community enjoys seeing men prancing around like women!

Even though during its heyday, 99 percent of the guys at Hoedowns couldn't saddle a horse if they had to (much less ride one with any sort of skill), at least most of them looked and acted like a male. With the new ownership came cover charges, drag and sissy boys — none of which I care to be around or associate with.

I'm a gay MAN that likes MEN who enjoys the company of other MEN and manly things. Hoedowns lost my business as soon as the drag queens set foot in the place. I just hope any non-profits that might have benefited from any generosity the original owners had can find those funds elsewhere to still help our community.

Don't get panties in a wad over Shirley Q.

Re Soapbox (Aug. 17):

Camp drag is fun and for fun. Don't get your panties in a wad. As long as Ms. Liquor does not put down black people she is OK.

Hey, fags, can we just get over the 'maricon' remark?

Re "The great gay debate" (news, Aug. 17):

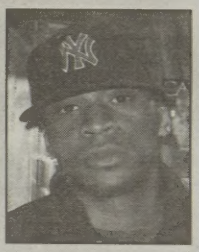
Oh good God. So New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson called Don Imus a "maricon." WHO F**ing CARES! Get over it fellow faggots! There are more important issues to worry about in this country. Personally, I am gay and faggot is one of the terms used to refer to us. I take more offense to grouping us with all the bisexuals and transgenders with the use of LGBT than I do someone calling us fags.

I think we missed the main point that Gov. Richardson was trying to make. We can't act like little kids: politics is for adults. If you can get 70 or 80 percent of what you want, grab it — and we will get the rest later.

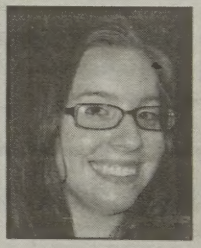
THE Q

Traditionally, white shoes are not supposed to be worn after Labor Day. What fashion rule do you wish would be enforced?

No dirty looks. And get a pedicure before you wear sandals.
Huey Wilinguyen, 28
Southeast Atlanta



No bright colors.
Tyl Waiters, 29
Cobb County



I think lesbians don't observe fashion rules. We will probably make up our own and they will involve flannel. The mullet's out, but we will find a way to bring it back.
Adrianne Wavelick, 20
College Park

I think mullets are definitely out and no one should have one.
Hanna Davis, 18
Moultrie

No visible pantylines.
Liz Shavers, 18
Columbus

Compiled by Rob Beck

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Black, gay and gifted: Standing on principle

viewpoint
ANARÉ V. HOLMES

Atlanta Black Gay Pride is more than a party. It's about honoring and affirming who we are.

WHEN I TAKE TO THE STREETS ON LABOR DAY as a first-time participant in the Stand Up & Represent March, which concludes In The Life Atlanta's 11th Annual Black Gay Pride celebration, I will walk from a place of strength and power.

It's taken the better part of 32 years on Earth to fully wrap my mind around the fact I can no longer be invisible in the larger community as a black gay man.

I can no longer sit on the sidelines and let others speak for me.

I can no longer watch institutions and programs — created by black gays and lesbians — continue to flounder without doing my part to lend a hand.

Maturity births the wisdom to acknowledge how the fight to eradicate homophobia and struggle to achieve human rights among all who are oppressed cannot be done alone, but through the assistance of diverse allies — transcending race, gender, class and other social constructs.

No greater movement reveals the points our lives intersect as Americans than in the struggle for civil and human rights.

A product of integration, I am a child of the dream Martin and others envisioned.

And, while the nation's isms are still present, with access to unparalleled resources and opportunities our forefathers and foremothers could only imagine, I'm more than capable to do the work required to build up the very institutions and programs responsible for my existence.

For being allowed the chance to experience safe, open and tolerant spaces for self-expression, the least I can do is affirm the experience of same-gender-loving men and women.

SO WHEN I MEET OTHER STAND UP & REP- resent participants at the King Center on Labor Day, I'll reflect on the legacy several pioneering groups achieved to help make this city a welcoming place of refuge for thousands of African-American gays and lesbians.

These contributions — from groups including, but not limited to, the Gay Atlanta Minority Association (Theo Thomas); the African-American Lesbian & Gay Alliance (Maurice O'Brien Franklin and Edna Brown); the Atlanta Feminist Women's Chorus (Carolyn Mobley); and the Coalition of African Descent — ushered in current community institutions such as ZAMI, In The Life Atlanta, the National AIDS Education Services for Minorities, Inc. and a host of other organizations.

The fruits of their labor are a testament to the critical mass of black gays and lesbians that reside in Atlanta and share common ground in advancing the rights, health and wellness of an underserved community — a clear advantage to living here versus other places where resources are absent.

There are dynamic men and women choosing to raise their voices to improve the quality of life for the city's LGBTQ community of color.

These boot-strappers are filled with ambition and determination to build on the accomplishments of elders like Duncan Teague, Rudolph Carn, Mary Anne Adams, Dee Dee Chamblee, Betty Couvertier, Pat Hussain and Craig Washington, to name a few.

I see these young leaders at the monthly Second Sunday discussions, revived by khalid kamau. I hear them on the airwaves as is the case with Lakara Foster on 89.3 WRFG FM's Alternative Perspectives. I see the work the folks over at ITLA perform to produce one of the largest Black Pride events in the world.

ATLANTA BLACK GAY PRIDE IS MORE THAN party. It's about honoring and affirming who we are. The talents, skills, abilities and contributions we've made in all facets of American life cannot be denied. More of us are coming out. More of us are growing into the men and women we are called to be.

As a black gay man, I've come to understand my place in the world and what I've been called to do, which is to use my gifts and abilities to build others up. Through unconditional love and acceptance from a supportive family, I was blessed to witness a father who displays courage and follows the beat of his own drum—a true man's man. I'd like to think the apple didn't fall far from the tree.

*Writer and media specialist **Anaré V. Holmes** is a producer for WRFG 89.3 FM's Alternative Perspectives program. He can be reached at avholmes@hotmail.com.*

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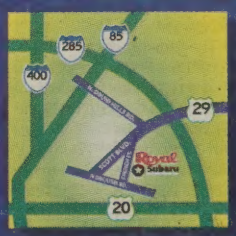

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SO SOUTHERN VOICE VO COMMUNITY

FRIDAY, AUG. 31

The Juxtaposed Center for Transformation, a transgender advocacy and education group, and AID Atlanta present an **HIV/AIDS Risk Reduction Workshop.** 7:30 p.m. at AID Atlanta, 1605 Peachtree St. NE. www.juxtaposedcenter.org, www.aidatlanta.org

Meet the Writers! Black Lesbian Authors Read New Stories includes a roster of black lesbian writers reading from their works. 8 p.m. Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse, 991 Piedmont Ave. www.nghosibooks.com

FRIDAY, AUG. 31 – SUNDAY, SEPT. 2

The **Decatur Book Festival** features a number of gay and lesbian writers. All weekend in downtown Decatur. www.decaturbookfestival.com

SATURDAY, SEPT. 1

The **State of Black Gay America Summit** offers a community-wide forum. 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. at the Renaissance Hotel's Georgia Ballroom, 590 W Peachtree St. www.atlantaprideweekend.com

SUNDAY, SEPT. 2

PHYRE presents **'The Nu Blak'** featuring performances by black lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people who work in the arts, literature, film, social and political activism and HIV/AIDS prevention. 5 p.m. at Sugar, 257 Trinity Ave. 678-280-7750, www.afterthephyre.org

SATURDAY, SEPT. 8

The Quicksilver Country Dancers hold a **Gender-Free Contra Dance,** featuring gender-neutral calling and partnering. 7:30 p.m. – 11 p.m. at the Horizons School Gymnasium, 1900 DeKalb Ave. NE. www.qcdancers.org

ON THE WEB:
For other calendars of special events, visit www.sovo.com.

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Rubbing noses for love

High-brow pet fashion show raises funds for PALS

By RYAN LEE
rlee@sovo.com

The 'Rubbing Noses' fashion show and silent auction benefits PALS, which provides pet support for people living with HIV/AIDS and other critical illnesses.

THE POOCHES POUNCING DOWN THE RUNWAY AT THE "FOXES & Hounds" fashion show on Sept. 8 won't be your everyday German Shepherds or some lazy lapdog, but instead a group of fiercely trained modeling divas.

All of the canines in the fashion show — which is part of "Rubbing Noses 2007," a benefit for Pets Are Loving Support — are registered by the Atlanta Kennel Club, meaning they're accustomed to being underneath the unforgiving hot lights and flashing cameras.

"These are all pure breeds, so they're used to being on display and walking," says Rick Westbrook, director of operations for PALS. "Their owners treat them like divas, so that's a good thing."

The hotshot hounds and their handlers will strut across the parking lot of Macy's at Lenox Square mall showing off the latest in country manor fashion.

"There'll be a lot of tweeds," says Westbrook, who adds that the event climaxes with an underwear walk-off.

"Sex sells, and so we're going to show as much skin as we can," Westbook says.

THE LAST "RUBBING NOSES" EVENT TOOK PLACE IN 2003, AND WAS resurrected this year with the help of Macy's.

Officials in Macy's new "Pride Network" division contacted PALS to see if the two groups could partner together to host a fashion show dubbed "Doggie Style."

"Which I thought was quite brave being in the Bible Belt, and this being the first event of their Pride Network," Westbrook jokes. "But Macy's has just been incredible — it's just incredible the stuff they're pulling out for us."

Unlike previous "Rubbing Noses," everything for this year's event — the venue, dog clothing and silent auction items — was donated.

"So the admission price and all the money we raise that day will go to the bank for PALS," Westbrook says.

Organizers are expecting 500-700 people to attend this year's "Rubbing Noses," which is hosted by Star 94 funnyman Tom Sullivan.

"I hosted the [Macy's 'Doggie Style'] event for a few years when it was first introduced, and now am excited to be back as host of 'Rubbing Noses,'" Sullivan says. "I love animals and have dogs myself, so working with PALS is the perfect match."

All Star Enterprises — a lesbian-owned company based in Suwanee, Ga. — is producing the "Rubbing Noses" silent auction, which includes jewelry, trips to destinations like San Francisco and Cancun, and sports and entertainment memorabilia.

WITH AN ESTIMATED GOAL OF GENERATING $50,000-$60,000, THE "Rubbing Noses" event would regain its status as the No. 2 fundraiser for PALS, which provides pets and support for people living with critical illnesses.

"Our mainstay has always been bingo," Westbrook says. "We've got that down to a science, so much so that we've begun reaching out to different agencies and sharing the profits with them."

The other marquee fundraisers for PALS include the annual K-9 Cotillion, the East Point Possums drag show and Pins for PALS.

"It's never hard to be creative [fundraising with dogs], and we can do pretty much what we want," says Westbrook, who assumed the leadership of PALS in July.

More than 17 years after PALS was established to comfort people living with HIV/AIDS, the agency is going strong.

"There's such a need for out little niche out there," says Westbrook, adding that it's impossible to describe the devotion many people have to their four-legged loved ones. "They're not worried about living in their car, they're worried about losing their pet."

PALS buys monthly food supplies, pays for vaccinations and veterinary care and offers free foster care to its clients, 95 percent of whom are living with HIV. The agency also connects clients to other HIV/AIDS organizations and support groups.

The demographics of PALS clients have shifted over time, but the severity and potential deadliness of the disease remain the same.

"We're getting more females than we did before," Westbrook says. "I still lose clients. I went to three funerals last week; but for the three that I lost, I get six more applications."

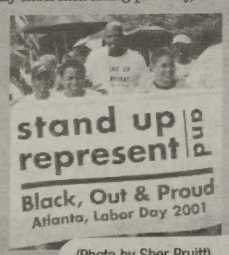
MORE INFO
Rubbing Noses 2007
Sept. 8, 2-5 p.m.
Macy's @ Lenox Square
3393 Peachtree Road
$50 VIP tickets
$20 general admission
404-876-7257
www.palsatlanta.org

SOVO FLASHBACK

Future ATL mayor joins first Black Gay Pride March

Armed with umbrellas and ponchos against the steady drizzle, an estimated 200 participants sloshed from the state capitol to the Martin Luther King Jr. Center and into history with Atlanta's first Black Gay Pride March on Labor Day 2001.

"This started as a dream," organizer Jimmie Scott told the crowd at the capitol. "I saw black gay men marching proudly, and I knew I had to make it a reality."



(Photo by Sher Pruitt)

The march was the culmination of events sponsored by In the Life Atlanta for Black Gay Pride weekend. After walking up Piedmont and across Auburn Avenue, the crowd collected under the wings of the MLK Center for Nonviolent Social Change and chanted "We're black, we're out, we're proud!"

All three 2001 mayoral candidates participated in different degrees, including Shirley Franklin, who won the election and is now serving her second term as Atlanta's mayor.

"The African-American [gay] community needs to be embraced and supported by the civil rights movement and by gay rights activists. As mayor I promise to work for all Atlantans, and by marching today I have turned by words into action," Franklin said after the march.

Southern Voice, Sept. 6, 2001

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THIS WEEK

FRIDAY, AUG. 31 – MONDAY, SEPT. 3
Atlanta Team Tennis Association, Peach Tournament, DeKalb Tennis Center and North Fulton Tennis Center. www.atta.org

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 5
Hotlanta Soccer, www.hotlantasoccer.com

UPCOMING

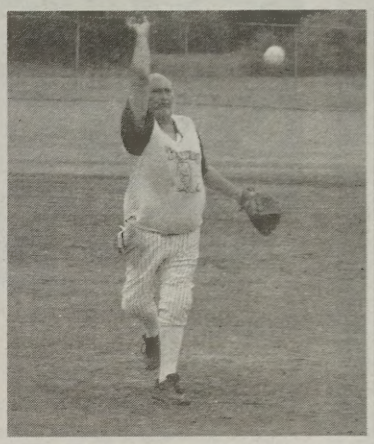
SEPT. 7: Atlanta Team Tennis Association, Friday Night Drills, Glenlake Tennis Center. www.atta.org
SEPT. 8: Atlanta Team Tennis Association, Open Play Doubles, Glenlake Tennis Center. www.atta.org
SEPT. 8: Atlanta Bucks Rugby vs. Valdosta, Coan Middle School. www.atlantabucksrugby.org
SEPT. 9: Atlanta Team Tennis Association, Sunday Morning Drills, Glenlake Tennis Center. www.atta.org
SEPT. 11: Hotlanta Volleyball, Intermediate/Advanced Leagues Registration and Team Draft, www.hotlantavolleyball.org

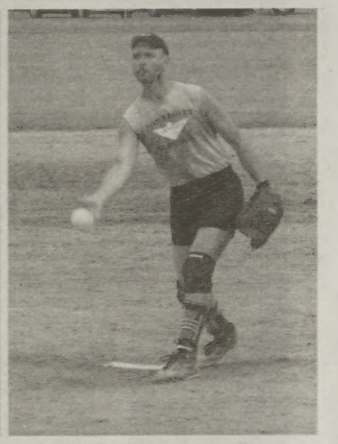
TO ADD A LISTING... e-mail calendar@sovo.com, call 404-876-1819, ext. 23, or fax to 404-876-2709, attn. Rob Beck.

Atlanta teams ready for run at World Series

Ten teams travel to Phoenix next month as Hotlanta Softball opens fall co-ed season

By MATT HENNIE





The Hotlanta Softball League finished its season last weekend and selected a slate of 10 teams to compete in the World Series. (Photos by Matt Hennie)

A GAY SOFTBALL TEAM FROM ATLANTA LAST brought home a championship trophy from the North American Gay Amateur Athletic Alliance World Series in 2004. Some 10 teams will attempt to end that three-year drought next month when they travel to Phoenix for the gay softball tournament.

The Hotlanta Softball League closed its 26th season last weekend, spending two days on the field sorting out which teams will represent it at the World Series, which brings together teams from the 56 leagues across 35 cities that comprise NAGAAA.

Angela Smith, who oversees HSL's Women's Division while also playing for the Gammas, now sets aside her glove and bat to ramp up fundraising efforts to cover the expected $16,000 cost of transporting, feeding and housing the team at the World Series, which runs Oct. 1-6.

"It's the camaraderie of meeting new people, seeing how their leagues run — it is a fun time," said Smith, who's played in the World Series each year since 1997. "When you use that as your week's vacation, you want to make it something that you like."

MORE INFO
Hotlanta Softball end-of-season party
Sept. 8, 5 p.m.
Jungle, 2115 Faulkner Road
www.hotlantasoftball.org

Fall Ball sign-up
Sept. 1, 12 p.m.
Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse
991 Piedmont Ave.
Sept. 5, 7 p.m.
Woofs Atlanta, 2425 Piedmont Road
Sept. 9, 5 p.m.
No Mas! Cantina, 180 Walker St.

Fall Ball season opens
Sept. 23, 9 a.m.
Piedmont Park athletic fields

Atlanta's World Series teams

Open Division	*Women's Division*
Venom and A's (A)	Riptide (A)
Sluggers (B)	Gamma (B)
Packers and Eagles (C)	Gamma Light (D)
Big Tease and Wet Demons (D)	

THE GAMMAS TOOK FIRST PLACE in the Alternative Division, one of three divisions for women in HSL. The Riptide rolled to the title in the Competitive Division, while the Fusion took the Recreational title.

"The high point of the season was seeing everyone having a good time and getting better at playing ball and being more competitive. We've played a long season this year," Smith said.

In the Open Division, which is comprised mostly of men though women are allowed on the teams, four divisions crowned champions earlier this month: Venom (A), Sluggers (B) and Packers (C), while Big Tease and War Eagles split the title (D). The lineup of HSL Division Champions and the teams that take the league's World Series berths are slightly different, as one women's team opted not to travel and there are more tournament spots available in the Open Division than champions.

Now the fundraising turns serious, Smith said. The Women's Division has held a wet t-shirt contest, boxing contests and will host a golf tournament on Sept. 8 at 8 a.m. at Alfred "Tup" Holmes Golf Course.

"You wouldn't believe the women who get in there and fight. They get their nose broken and black eyes. Pretty much you name it, we'll do it to raise money," Smith said.

The Gammas hope to raise enough to rent a motor home during the Phoenix tournament, a tradition that goes back several years. They park alongside the fields to rest between games. And in years when fundraising fell short, Smith said they've driven it hundreds of miles to the World Series site.

BEFORE THE EXCITEMENT OF THE WORLD Series, HSL kicks off Fall Ball, a brief co-ed season that mixes players of all skills across its six teams. For the first time, the league will play its games at the athletic fields of Piedmont Park, moving from HSL's usual home in southwest Fulton County.

"It will be new exposure for the league. It's also a good entry point for people who want to start playing," Smith said.

The season opens Sept. 23, with additional games on Oct. 14, Oct. 28 and Nov. 4.

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SOVO itinerary

SOUTHERN VOICE

AUG. 31 – SEPT. 9

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FRIDAY AUG. 31 & **SATURDAY** SEPT. 1
Men's Night Cabaret features four of Atlanta's popular male singers showcasing their talents. 8 p.m. at Onstage Atlanta, 2597 North Decatur Road. 404-897-1802. www.onstageatlanta.com

FRIDAY AUG. 31– **SUNDAY** SEPT. 2
Feel pretty, witty and gay at Theater of the Star's production of the classic **'West Side Story.'** Check website for show times at the Fabulous Fox, 660 Peachtree St. NE. www.foxtheatre.org

WEDNESDAY AUG. 22
The **Decatur Book Festival** presents a number of gay and lesbian writers, including Edmund White, who debuts his new book, and Fiona Zedde, author of 'Every Dark Desire.' All weekend in downtown Decatur. www.decaturbookfestival.com

SATURDAY SEPT. 1
After success during MondoHomo in July, lesbian hip-hop duo **Team Gina** brings its Heatwave Tour to Atlanta, accompanied by **Katastrophe** and **Athens Boys Choir**. 8 p.m. at Eyedrum, 290 MLK Jr. Drive SE Suite 8. 404-522-0655, www.eyedrum.org

FRIDAY AUG. 31
WETbar continues its 'Totally Awesome 80s' series with an appearance from former New Kid on the Block, **Jordan Knight**. 10 p.m. at WETbar, 960 Spring St. 404-745-9494, www.wetbaratlanta.com

OVAH! Productions steps up to the plate with superstar **DJ Chris Cox** headlining its Labor Day party, with a special performance by circuit diva Phoenix. 10 p.m. at the Loft at Center Stage, 1374 Peachtree St. NW. www.myspace.com/ovahpro

SUNDAY SEPT. 2
Fruitcake Productions celebrates Labor Day with a special edition of **2-T-Fruity** with **DJ Ralph Rosario**. 6 p.m. – 3 a.m. at Fever, 1789 Cheshire Bridge Road. www.fruitcakeproductions.com

The **Sci-Fi Gourmet TV Dinner Theatre Cabaret** is a campy, sci-fi dream come true. 7:30 p.m. at Onstage Atlanta, 2597 N Decatur Road. 404-897-1802, www.onstageatlanta.com

MONDAY SEPT. 3
Friends on Ponce hosts its annual **Labor Day BBQ**. 4 p.m. – 6 p.m. at Friends on Ponce, 736 Ponce de Leon Ave. 404-817-3820, www.friendsonponce.com

WEDNESDAY SEPT. 5
The Alliance Theatre presents **'The Women of Brewster Place,'** a world premiere musical based on the novel by Gloria Naylor. Through Sept. 30 at the Alliance Theatre, 1280 Peachtree St. 404-733-5000, www.alliancetheatre.org

THURSDAY SEPT. 6
Actors Express premieres its new play, **'Dark Play or Stories for Boys,'** a thriller about an online connection. Through Oct. 6 at Actor's Express, 887 W. Marietta St. 404-607-SHOW, www.actors-express.com

Gay-owned Romo Gallery unveils a new show with artists **Stephanie DeArmond** and **Zane Lewis**. Through Oct. 13 at Romo Gallery, 310 Peters St. SW. 404-222-9955, www.romo-gallery.com

SATURDAY SEPT. 8
Quicksilver Country Dancers presents its **Gender-Free Contra Dance**. 7:30 p.m. – 11 p.m. at the Horizons School Gymnasium, 1900 DeKalb Ave. www.qcdancers.org

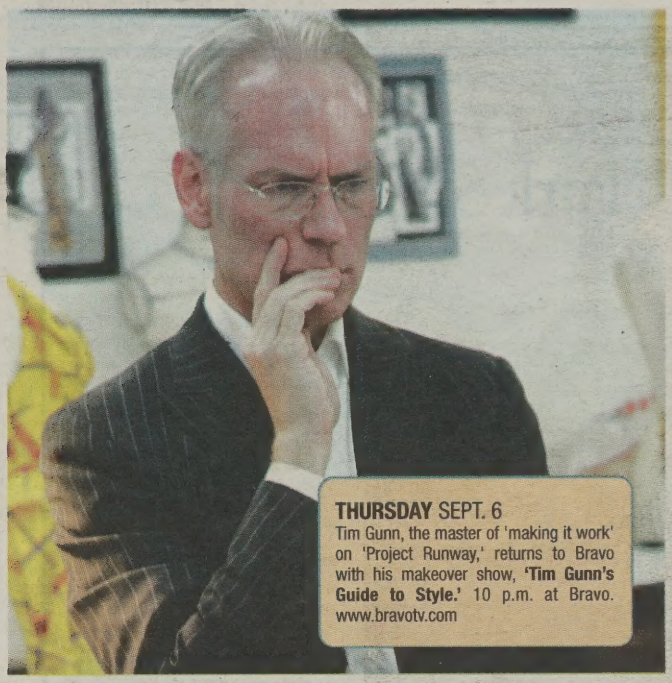
PALS Atlanta hosts **'Rubbing Noses,'** a fashion show and silent auction benefiting the organization, which provides pet care for ill people. 2 p.m. – 5 p.m. at Macy's Lenox Square. www.palsatlanta.org

Hotlanta Softball celebrates the end of season and the upcoming softball world series with a **party and camp drag pageant.** 10 p.m. at Jungle, 2115 Faulkner Road. www.hotlantasoftball.org

Friends on Ponce throws its **2nd Annual Turnabout Showcase**, featuring the bar's staff dressing in drag and taking the stage. 10 p.m. at Friends on Ponce, 736 Ponce de Leon Ave. 404-817-3820, www.friendsonponce.com

FRIDAY AUG. 31
Owen and the boys of the Court of Kings unveil their new weekly show, **'Grind.'** 11:30 p.m. at Masquerade, 695 North Ave. NE. www.myspace.com/courtofkings

BLACK GAY PRIDE 2007
Event Calendar, Page 39



THURSDAY SEPT. 6
Tim Gunn, the master of 'making it work' on 'Project Runway,' returns to Bravo with his makeover show, **'Tim Gunn's Guide to Style.'** 10 p.m. at Bravo. www.bravotv.com

AUG. 29 - SEPT. 9

SO SOUTHERN VOICE VO itinerary

SUNDAY SEPT. 9
Break out your sexy shoes when Paris Decatur presents its **Shoe Fetish Party**. 10 p.m. at Paris Decatur, 308H W Ponce de Leon Ave., Decatur. 404-687-1965, www.parisdecatur.com

ON THE WEB: *For other calendars of special events, visit www.sovo.com.*

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AUG. 31 - SEPT. 29, 2007

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					31 The **Decatur Book Festival** begins. decaturbookfestival.com **Jordan Knight** at WETbar. www.wetbaratlanta.com **Shonia Brown** at Outwrite. www.outwritebooks.com	SEPT. 1 **Spark at Masquerade.** www.myspace.com/chriskind **Athens Boys Choir** and **Team Gina** at Eyedrum. www.eyedrum.org
2 **2-T-Fruity** with Ralph Rosario. fruitcakeproductions.com **Voices Rising** at Charis. charisbooksandmore.com	3 **Industry Night** at Amsterdam. amsterdam-atlanta.com **Labor Day BBQ** at Friends on Ponce. friendsonponce.com	4 **Mary-oke** at Mary's. www.marysatlanta.com	5 **Walking with Dinosaurs** at Philips Arena. ticketmaster.com **'The Women of Brewster Place'** opens at the Alliance. alliancetheatre.org	6 **Stephanie DeArmond** and **Zane Lewis** at Romo Gallery. romogallery.com **Disability 101** part 3 at Charis. charisbooksandmore.com	7 **Kitty LeClaw's MeowMix** at Blake's. blakesontheparkatlanta.com **Mehme Dogu** opens at Whitespace. whitespace814.com	8 **Gender Free Contra Dance.** www.qcdancers.org **PALS Rubbing Noses.** www.palsatlanta.com **Queen of the Strut** at Mary's. marysatlanta.com
9 **Shoe Fetish Party** at Paris Decatur. www.parisdecatur.com	10 **Young Women Writers workshop** at Charis. charisbooksandmore.com	11 Drag Gone Wild presents **Project Runway** at Blake's. blakesontheparkatlanta.com	12 **PALS Bingo.** www.palsatlanta.com	13 **Princess Charles' Fashionistas** at Burkharts. www.burkharts.com **Financial Planning for the Fiscally Challenged** at Charis. charisbooksandmore.com	14 **4th Tuesday Happy Hour** at Paris Decatur. www.parisdecatur.com	15 **The Atlanta Cotillion.** www.atlantacotillion.com **Buffy: The Musical at the** Plaza Theatre. www.buffysings.com **Hector Fonseca** at Fruitcake's Passion. fruitcakeproductions.com
16 **ALHI Garden Party.** www.thehealthinitiative.org	17 **Industry Night** at Amsterdam. amsterdam-atlanta.com	18 **STOMP!** at the Fox. www.foxtheatre.org	19 **Bjork at the Fox.** www.foxtheatre.org **Cocktails with Charis** at Birdi's. www.charisbook-sandmore.com	20 **Underwear Night** at the Eagle. www.atlantaeagle.com	21 **Lisa Lisa** at WETbar. www.wetbaratlanta.com	22 **Grant Park Tour of Homes** begins. www.grantpark.org
23 **Atlanta Rollergirls Tryouts.** www.atlantarollergirls.com **AGLCC 'Cruisin' on Lake Lanier.'** atlantagaychamber.org	24 **Writing with Intent work-shop** at Charis. charisbooksandmore.com	25 **'The Rat Pack Live at the Sands'** opens at the Fox. www.foxtheatre.org	26 Gay author **David Leavitt** at Wordsmiths. wordsmithsbooks.com	27 AIDS Survival Project presents **'What's New in Atlanta Clinical Trials' forum.** aidssurvivalproject.org	28 **17th Street Art Fair** at Atlantic Station. www.17thstreetartfair.com	29 **CHRIS Kids' CHRIStal Ball.** www.chriskids.org **Fourth Tuesday's Best Ball Golf Tournament.** www.fourthtuesday.org

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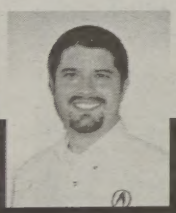

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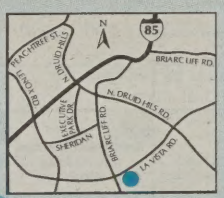

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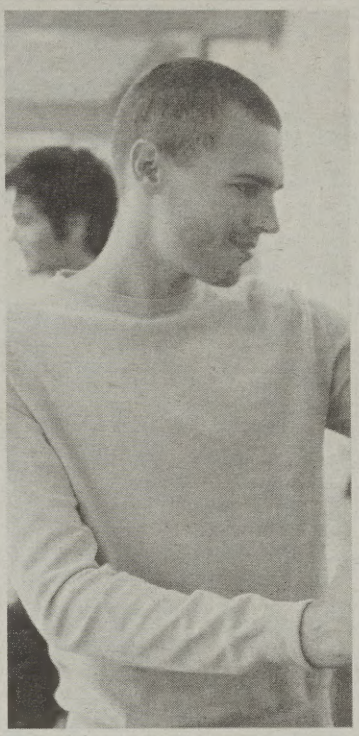

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LAST SPLASH

LABOR GAY WEEKEND BIDS SUMMER ADIEU WITH HOTLANTA STYLE

By ROB BECK
rbeck@sovo.com

LABOR DAY WEEKEND IS WIDELY KNOWN AS SUMMER'S LAST hurrah, the last big party weekend before everyone buckles down for the fall and winter. This year, Atlanta's wide range of parties and events, in addition to Black Gay Pride, offer a fitting goodbye to the season.

The Court of Kings, Atlanta's premier drag king troupe, kicks the holiday weekend off on Friday, Aug. 31, at Masquerade with the first installment of its new weekly show, "Grind."

"Grind" takes a cue from "Spark," Masquerade's Saturday night show, by featuring "spotlight performances," two shorter shows taking place at 12:15 a.m. and 1:15 a.m., instead of one hour-long show.

Court of Kings master of ceremonies Owen McCord says the crowd should appreciate this punctuated approach to showmanship.

"This way the night just continuously flows; there's not a breakup of an hour-long show," he says. "A lot of people just want to have a good time and dance and see a show, but not let it take up their entire evening. We're trying to bring something a little different."

McCord says that "Grind" offers a lower-priced alternative to other Labor Day Weekend parties that fits perfectly with the spirit of the holiday, and that diversity and unity are two key aspects of the Kings' mission.

"It gives us girls a chance to come to a party that's not quite as expensive as the rest of the parties," he says, "and it's a very mixed crowd between guys and girls of different races. Everybody automatically knows they're welcome, and that's what we want."

The Kings shows at the now-closed Red Chair are the atmosphere McCord and company want to recreate.

"It's a summer party," he says. "It's going to be a lot of grinding, it's going to be hot music. We're trying to bring back what we used to have [at Red Chair], and that's what this weekend represents for a lot of people. It's about coming together, so we're just going to have a big, old party for everybody."

AS ALWAYS, BOYS ARE WELCOME AT THE COURT OF KINGS' SHOW, but gay men have a few parties of their own in the works.

Fruitcake Productions gets in on the Labor Day Weekend action with two major parties. First up is Saturday's late night "Passion," featuring local DJ VanCronkhite, followed by Sunday's blowout "2-T-Fruity," with DJ/Producer Ralphi Rosario.

Fruitcake's Fernando Jardim looks forward to the energy Rosario brings to his sets.

"Ralphi is one of the most talented DJ/producers in the US and a great friend," Jardim says. "We have worked with him on several previous occasions, either alone or with his partner in crime Abel, and the events are always a huge hit with our community."

Jardim says he hopes this installment of "2-T-Fruity" provides the perfect accent to the weekend's events.

"Labor Day is a special holiday when everyone is in town and off on Monday, so we thought it would be a great fit for an unforgettable '2-T-Fruity' Tea Dance," he says.

Also on the weekend's party docket are DJ Chris Cox's appearance via OVAH! Production's Saturday night shindig

Please see **LABOR DAY** on **Page 40**

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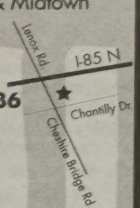

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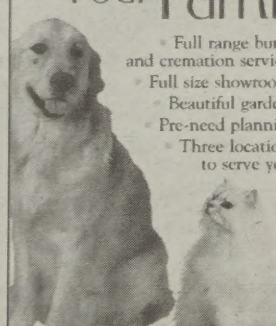

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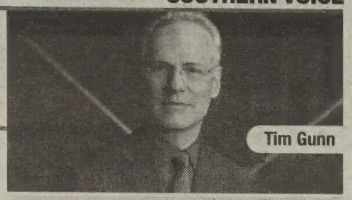

'Project Runway' mentor Tim Gunn premieres new series

'Tim Gunn's Guide to Style'
Thursday, Sept. 6, 10 p.m. on Bravo
Comcast channel 70

Reality show celebrity Tim Gunn breaks from "Project Runway" to explore the closets of unfashionable women on his new show "Tim Gunn's Guide to Style," which debuts Sept. 6 on Bravo. "Guide" empowers willing subjects with new wardrobes based on theory from Gunn's best-selling tome "Tim Gunn: A Guide to Quality, Taste and Style."

"These women have self-declared their need for help, and basically, they share being in a fashion rut," Gunn explains of the 13 women who undergo transformations during the first season.

One-time supermodel Veronica Webb appears alongside Gunn as a shopping expert. They work with each woman to "bring out her own, personal style," Gunn says, though the show includes tips from which he says every woman can benefit.

Gunn worked as chair of fashion design at Parson's The New School of Design through March 2007, before resigning to become chief creative officer for Liz Claiborne. He says he will return for at least one more season of "Project Runway," which begins its new season in late fall 2007.

— Zack Hudson

Pride quickens countdown to Falltacular retreat

Falltacular in the Smoky Mountains

Falltacular Pride Party
Sept. 1, 3-8 p.m.
Joe's Crab Shack
2175 Cobb Parkway
www.falltacular.com

When Will Horn and the other organizers of the Falltacular retreat host their Black Gay Pride party at Joe's Crab Shack in Marietta on Sept. 1, they know they already have one thing going for them.

"That's one of the few events going on that weekend that won't have a cover charge," Horn says of the mixer, which features appetizers, DJs and performance artists.

"We have something there once a month anyway that draws a really good crowd, so we're expecting about 300 people this weekend," Horn adds.

The monthly lead-up events at Joe's Crab Shack are opportunities for people to register for the Falltacular retreat, which takes place Nov. 8-11. Horn began the annual event six years ago when he and some friends celebrated his partner's birthday in Tennessee's Smoky Mountains.

"Here we are now where we have people registered from 20 different states," Horn says.

The four-day retreat features local celebrities like V-103 drag personality Miss Sophia, author J.L. King, and neo-soul artists Rahbi and Kimberly'Nichole. A $275 entry fee covers lodging, meals, cocktails and nightly parties. An addditional $75 buys a roundtrip from Atlanta to Pigeon Forge, Tenn., aboard a party bus.

The deadline for reservations is Oct. 8, but spaces are filling up quickly, Horn says.

— Ryan Lee

GPB's 'State of the Arts' hosts Indigo Girls

'State of the Arts'
Aug. 31, 7 p.m., Sept. 2, 4 p.m. and midnight
Georgia Public Broadcasting
Channel 8, Comcast channel 8
www.gpb.org

The latest episode of Georgia Public Broadcasting's quarterly series "State of the Arts" features an in-depth interview with Indigo Girls Amy Ray and Emily Saliers, as well as a GPB studio performance of their hits "Closer to Fine" and "Pendulum Swinger," among others.

The episode premiered Aug. 30 and encores are scheduled for Aug. 31 and Sept. 2. The lesbian duo discusses the reciprocal relationship between artistry and activism, and explains their songwriting techniques.

"Amy writes her own songs, and I write my own songs, but what we do together is arrange the songs," Saliers says in the interview. "We'll just play the songs for each other, or give each other tapes to absorb them and then start throwing out ideas."

Ray says that activism, through their music as well as offstage, is an integral part of their work.

"I'm proud of the good things about Georgia, and working to change the bad things," she says. "We always will be, and I think that affects our music too. There's always hope if you can affect change."

The episode also includes a look into the life of writer Flannery O'Connor.

— Mike Fleming

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Gone COUNTRY

Jungle switches to country format; others make plans in absence of Hoedowns

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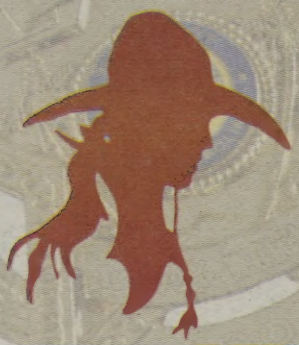


By ROB BECK

JUNGLE, FORMERLY A MAINSTAY IN ATLANTA'S gay DJ/dance scene, plans to make the switch to a country-western format, owner Brad Williams confirms.

Just as news of Hoedowns' closure started to settle in, rumors began to fly early last week as Williams circulated teaser messages on MySpace featuring Jungle's familiar "J" logo with a cowboy hat perched on top. This week, Williams confirms the switch and says he plans a name change as well as decor renovations to go along with the new format. A soft-opening is scheduled for Sept. 1 and a grand opening in mid-September.

"I enjoy country music, and I've always had the idea of doing a country-western bar, but never wanted to do one [because] I don't think there's room for two of them," he says.

He says Hoedowns' recent closing proved perfect timing for him to jump on his country-western dream, with some prompting.

"The opportunity came up and ... a lot of people came up to me and said, 'Would you consider it?'" he says. "I thought, 'This could be fun, let's go for it!'"

Williams remains mum on the name of the new bar, but he assures that patrons will see just that when they walk through the doors: a new bar.

"All the décor's changing," he says. "The wood dance floor's going in right now, and the whole place has been primered already, so it's all new."

The bar may maintain a sexy aspect, but it will be all country, all the time. There are no plans to take a cue from Hoedowns' controversial format changes that happened this year, he says.

"It'll be full-scale country," he says. "You will hear country music every time you walk through the door."

WILLIAMS ISN'T THE ONLY BAR OWNER looking to ensure that Atlanta's gay country-western fans have a bar to call their own. Original Hoedowns owner Deana Collins confirms that she is "definitely, 100 percent" set on opening a new country-western bar.

She does not confirm the new bar's location, but says it will be located in-town and called the Three-Legged Cowboy, with a grand opening tentatively scheduled for the end of September.

Collins says she didn't want to open a new bar until now because she wanted to give Hoedowns a fighting chance, and that community loyalty will be the key to her success.

"Everybody's going to cash in on a country theme now, but we started when nobody would touch country."

Collins has no plans to see her new endeavor go the same way as Hoedowns.

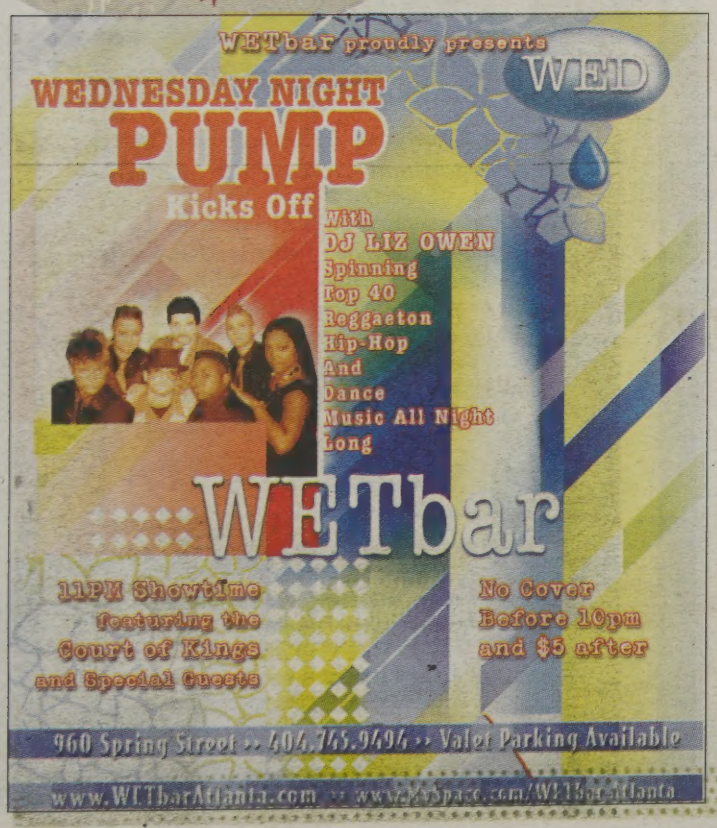
"This bar ain't for sale," she says. "Never again. If I drop dead, it will go to a non-profit. It has to go back to my community."

Brad Eaton, a Hoedowns shareholder who currently owns the Hoedowns name, held a meeting right after the bar's closure about reopening Hoedowns with the support of former patrons. No updates on those plans were available by press time.

Atlanta Country Kickers, a group of country music enthusiasts, sent out press releases last week announcing plans to help Hoedowns' patrons organize to support opening the bar in a new location. An Aug. 25 benefit dance drew more than 150 attendees, according to Leigh Broschat of ACK.

Broschat said this week that while the group is not affiliated with Hoedowns or Eaton, it is committed to keeping country dancing alive in Atlanta.

"We're coordinating dance places where we can all meet, stay in touch with each other, and stay connected," Broschat says. "Just because a bar has folded doesn't mean the people have to go away from each other or lose contact. I guess in a way we're sort of helping to become the glue that's helping the community stay together while we see what's going to happen."



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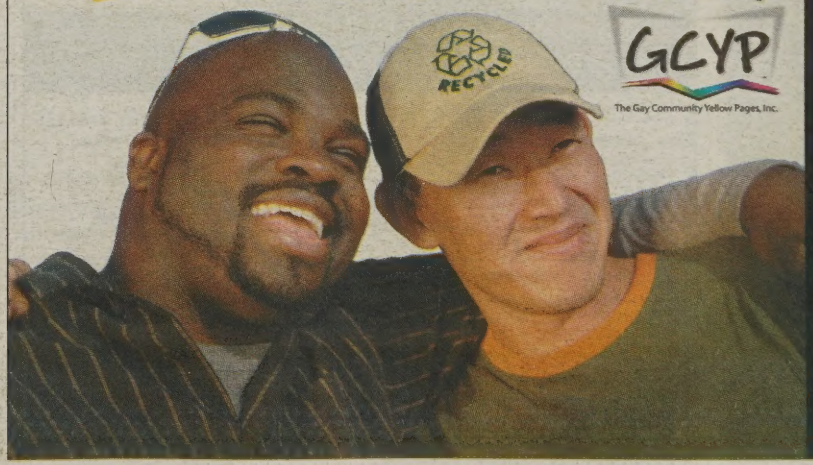

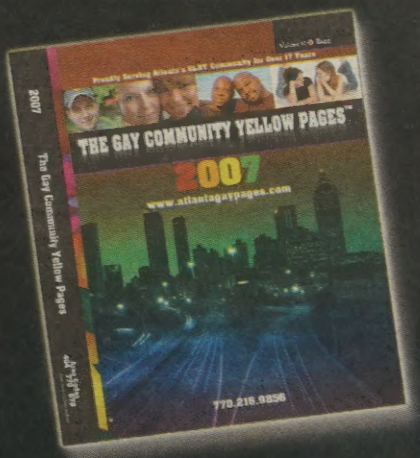

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Literary movement

Authors take spotlight during Black Gay Pride

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By ZACK HUDSON
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DAPHANY WILLIAMS-DUBOIS CAN RELATE TO just about anything. Still under age 30, the transgender author says that in her short time on earth she's suffered through enough troubles and overcome enough obstacles that she earned the right to sing the blues. But she's still looking for a happy ending, as evidenced in her book "Emotionally Scarred: Monologues for the Soul in Us."

Of course, not everybody shares Williams-Dubois' background. She was born male — alongside a twin sister — into a devoutly religious family of Jehovah's Witnesses in Niagara Falls, N.Y. She secretly began the gender transition process in her teens but faced constant pressure from her family to put away her make-up and act masculine — and straight — instead.

"When I did come out about my sexuality and being transgender, I was disowned and I was ex-communicated from the church I was raised in," she says.

SHE WAS A TEENAGER JUST OUT OF HIGH school then. Today, she is a Decatur resident with a hard-won college degree and a newly self-published book that focuses on happy endings.

"I wanted to show people that even though that was my situation, I've done something good," she says.

"Emotionally Scarred" is meant to be read aloud, according to the author, who divided the book's stories into monologues.

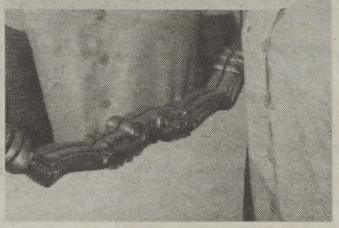
"That's so people can actually feel a little bit about what I was going through, even if it wasn't something that was part of their own experience," she explains.

When Williams-Dubois reads from her book during the Black Gay Pride Literary Café, she'll give listeners the feelings of an 80-year-old woman — a character Williams-Dubois introduces in "The Victim of Unending Prejudice."

"You wonder — just in the way she tells it — if she's telling the truth about some of the things she's seen," Williams-Dubois says.

TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT BLACK GAY EXPERIEnce is largely the focus of the literary arts portion of Black Gay Pride. And as much as that experience includes phenomena like the down low — which "The Down Low Diaries" author Eric Ware is scheduled to discuss — or the alienation black gay men and lesbians can face as "Not In My Family" author Gil Robertson can attest, there are also sweet triumphs.

Transgender author **Daphany Williams-Dubois** shares her life story alongside other notable authors at the Black Gay Pride Literary Café. (Photo by Zack Hudson)



Author and publisher Lisa C. Moore is scheduled to read from her "Voices Rising" anthology during the Literary Cafe, and local lesbian erotica author Fiona Zedde will share her "Every Dark Desire."

Moore also appears at Charis Books & More's Sept. 2 "Voices Rising: Celebrating 20 Years of Black, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Writing." That event also includes Atlanta contributors like Duncan Teague and Malik M.L. Williams, as well as contributor Reginald Harris and editor G. Winston James.

At Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse, more authors are scheduled to appear in conjunction with Black Gay Pride. Shonia Brown, editor of "Longing, Lust, and Love: Black Lesbian Stories," appears Aug. 31 with contributors Tanaine Jenkins, Ranair Amin and Claudia Moss. On Sept. 1, Outwrite hosts Stanley Bennett Clay and his steamy new novel "Looker."

MORE INFO

Black Gay Pride Literary Café
Sept. 1, 4 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Sheraton Atlanta, 165 Courtland St.
$5 admission or free with festival pass

Voices Rising
Sept. 2, 6 p.m.-7:30 p.m.
Charis Books & More, 1189 Euclid Ave.
404-524-0304
www.charisbooksandmore.com

Shonia Brown and contributors
Aug. 31, 8 p.m.
Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse
991 Piedmont Ave., 404-607-0082
www.outwritebooks.com

Stanley Bennett Clay
Sept. 1, 8 p.m. at Outwrite

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Huge and juicy

Some of Atlanta's best burgers fulfill your most insatiable cravings

By MIKE FLEMING
mfleming@sovo.com

There are definitely times when fine dining fills the bill. But especially when you're grungy, tired and just hungry, nothing squelches hunger pains like a good burger.

Smoky, juicy, fattening and supersized with your personal perfect lineup of condiments, here are a just a few Atlanta restaurants serving burgers sure to leave you satisfied.

GEORGE'S: Tucked in the high-tone shopping district near the intersection of Virginia and Highland avenues, this bar and grill has seen changes in its surroundings in the last 46 years. But inside, it manages to maintain a neighborly, casual feel and a menu that's a step above bar food, but just as comforting.

On a different day, we'd recommend the perfectly prepared Reuben. But today, we're all about the humongous burgers. These gems take two hands and extra napkins, and come with fries or incredible onion rings that are among Atlanta's best.

Whether you just finished mowing the lawn, operating a crane, or even shopping in your finest clothes, welcome to George's. Slide into a booth, order a beer from the long list, and prepare to be satiated.

FIVE GUYS: What'll ya have? It's an easy question to answer at this super-fast counter chain that is scoring regulars in Buckhead, Edgewood and several 'burbs.

There isn't much time to decide as the busy crew scuttles about barking orders as they come up. But with a menu limited to burgers, dogs and fries, the choices are simple. Have your high-stacked burger or fat frank with cheese, bacon, or both. Easy enough?

The addictive skin-on fries arrive spilling out of their containers, and only the most arduous eater could finish an order alone. A nice array of complementary toppings includes the usuals as well as jalapeños, bell peppers, relish, fried onions and sautéed mushrooms.

Order up! Get back up there and sink your teeth into one of the fastest, juiciest burgers in town.

VORTEX: This Atlanta institution doesn't take any crap. In fact, it's partially known for the long list of rules printed on its menu declaring its Midtown and Little Five Points locations "Idiot Free Zones," and implicitly reserving the restaurant's right to mock stupid questions and kick your ass out.

The Vortex in Little Five Points

It's hilarious reading, but they're serious. Don't talk back, and everyone is welcome.

They get away with it because the food is fantastic, including signature burgers from plain jane to blackened to bleu cheese and beyond. If you can imagine it on a burger, a version is probably already on the menu. We recommend ordering yours with the amazing tater tots.

Both locations are loud, but the atmosphere in Little Five Points is maybe a little more raucous, including nights when diners must navigate a sea of motorcycles to get in the door framed by the mouth of a giant skull. Don't be scared, the atmosphere is part of the experience.

Be good, sit and stay. These burgers are worth it.

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Queen of Soul cancels, but Pride hosts more celebs

PLUMMER, continued from Page 1

that "Stella" wasn't grooving happily ever after. In June of that year, McMillan and Plummer's May-December marriage ended in a messy divorce after Plummer told McMillan that he is gay.

McMillan responded by telling Oprah Winfrey and anyone else who would listen that Plummer conned her by hiding his sexual orientation in order to marry into money and gain U.S. citizenship. In March, McMillan filed a $40 million defamation and extortion lawsuit against Plummer, whom she regularly refers to as a "faggot."

This weekend, Plummer brings his side of the story to Atlanta's Black Gay Pride festival as he kicks off a national book tour promoting his debut novel, "Balancing Act." Plummer also co-hosts In The Life Atlanta's "Family Feud" game show on Sept. 2.

"People realize that she wrote her story, and now this is a way of showing an alternative side of my story," Plummer tells Southern Voice.

Just as "Stella" was loosely based on McMillan's courtship with Plummer, many parts of "Balancing Act" harmonize with Plummer's real life.

The story centers around Justin Blakeman, a young Jamaican with "hazel-green eyes offset by dark chocolate skin" who catches the attention of Tasha Reynolds, a vacationing powerhouse modeling agent.

Tasha brings her Jamaican boy toy to America where the two of them engage in a "complex game of sexual desire and control" that is complicated further "when Justin discovers a hidden hunger for a male model," according to the promotional material put out by the book's publisher, Simon & Schuster.

The book is "fiction with a purpose, and it's a funny and sexy story," the author says of "Balancing Act," which he co-wrote with Karen Hunter. "It mirrors my life and it mirrors my coming out process, but the main character Justin Blakeman is a hero, and I don't really consider myself a hero."

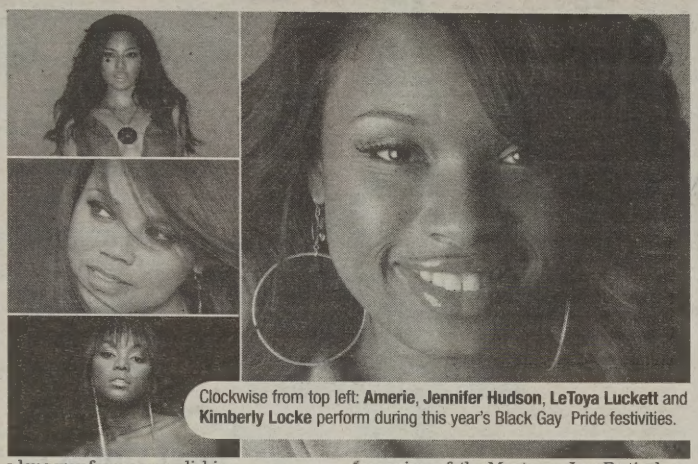
LINGERING SHADOWS The main character's acceptance of his sexual orientation is more immediate and honest than Plummer's real-life experience, which is why the author considers his protagonist a hero. Having transitioned from an icon of love to the epitome of deception, Plummer wants readers to know that while he's no angel, he's not the backstabbing, villainous liar McMillan has made him out to be.

"It really caught me off guard the way she responded and how bitter she is," Plummer says. "I came out, I wasn't found out, and I want people to know that. She's been telling a lot of people she caught me, but that's definitely not true — I decided to be truthful to her."

It took Plummer about two years to complete "Balancing Act." He crafted it as a piece of fiction rather than an autobiography with hopes of appealing to more readers — and because he isn't prepared to tell his life story, he says.

"I think I'm just a little bit too young for that yet," he says. "I've still got a lot to learn and a lot ahead of me."

Plummer yearns for the day when he escapes McMillan's shadow, something he is a long way from accomplishing.



Clockwise from top left: **Amerie**, **Jennifer Hudson**, **LeToya Luckett** and **Kimberly Locke** perform during this year's Black Gay Pride festivities.

McMillan also remains a kink in Plummer's love life.

"I'm dating, but it's rough," Plummer says. "People, their impression is like, 'Oh, you're Terry McMillan's ex-husband,' and there's a lot of baggage that comes with that. It's kind of hard because people don't really see me for who I really am; all they see is Terry.

"I'm a good, loving person, I think, and so hopefully people are ready to see me for who I am," he adds.

Plummer, who says his first sexual experience with a man was three years ago, is quickly settling into his identity as a gay man.

"It was a little scary at first, but the more [other gay men] started embracing me, then I felt comfortable," he says. "Coming out means honoring who you are on the inside, and I'm still coming out. I'm a work in progress."

QUEEN CANCELS Plummer is among a large roster of celebrities attending Black Gay Pride, but the entertainment lineup slimmed down last week when the "Queen of Soul" announced that she was canceling her Labor Day weekend concert at Chastain Park Amphitheatre. Aretha Franklin was scheduled to headline Atlanta's Montreux Jazz festival, and discount tickets were available to Pride attendees via ITLA, which organizes official events for Black Gay Pride.

Zandra Conway, an ITLA board member, said the organization will refund money to ticket holders who purchased seats through ITLA.

"It's disappointing, sure. It was a highlight of Black Gay Pride, and people were buying tickets for that who probably wouldn't attend a lot of the other events," Conway said.

Conway said the ITLA seats were selling briskly, but did not have an immediate estimate of how many tickets the group had sold to the now-canceled show.

In a press release to Atlanta news media, Franklin blamed the cancellation on the hot summer temperature. The 65-year-old musical legend canceled a performance at an outdoor venue in Detroit earlier this summer and cited high temperatures as the reason then.

Word of Franklin's decision reached the city of Atlanta's Office of Cultural Affairs, an organizer of the Montreux Jazz Festival, on Aug. 22, according to director Camille Love.

Early reports that Franklin's show was merely postponed are inaccurate, according to Love, who said that her office offered Franklin the use of the Atlanta Civic Center as a substitute for Chastain.

"We understood her concerns about her health and the temperatures. With respect to that, even though there was an air-conditioned stage at Chastain, we chose to offer her a different venue that was inside, air-conditioned, and comfortable in a great venue," Love explained.

Franklin declined. No alternate date — at least organized through the city — is scheduled.

OTHER CELEBS Celebrities still scheduled to attend this weekend's Black Gay Pride include Oscar-winner Jennifer Hudson performing at the Lion's Den party at Club Europe Sept. 2, and "American Idol" semi-finalist Kimberly Locke singing at the "Full Moon" party at the new Traxx on Sept. 1. R&B sensation Amerie takes the stage at the "Men R From Mars" party at Atlanta Live on Aug. 31.

Traxx Girls also brings a handful of stars to town for its weekend of parties for women. "America's Next Top Model" alumna Eva Pigford and Jade Cole host a Sept. 1 Traxx Girls block party in downtown Atlanta, the same night that the British R&B duo Floetry performs at Club Attraxxions.

Also on Sept. 1, Traxx Girls hosts its signature party at Atlanta Live, which almost 4,000 lesbians attended last year.

"I can only imagine what this year is going to be like — that evening is just bannoodles," says Melissa Scott, one of the organizers of Traxx Girls.

The Atlanta Live party features appearances by Tiffany "New York" Pollard from "Flavor of Love," "American Idol" castoff Frenchie Davis, and singer LeToya Luckett, formerly of Destiny's Child.

Traxx Girls' Sept. 2 party at Club Europe reserves the mic for local artists including the rap group Crime Mob, singer Spring, and Wanita "D-Woods" Woodgette, one of the sex kittens from the group Danity Kane.

Zack Hudson contributed to this article.

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Black Gay Pride events

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Cocktails & Conversations w/ Girls in the Night
5-8 p.m.
Westin Peachtree Plaza
210 Peachtree St.

Yahzarah and **Kevin Bryant** are among the performers at In the Life Atlanta's opening ceremony on Friday night.

ITLA Opening Ceremony
8-10 p.m. at the Sheraton Hotel

Longing, Lust & Love book signing
8 p.m.
Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse
991 Piedmont Ave., 404-607-0082

ITLA Speakfire!
11:59 p.m.-3 a.m.
Sheraton Hotel

Manhunt Friday
10 p.m.-3 a.m.
Tower II, 735 Ralph McGill Blvd.

Blatino & Papi fest
10 p.m.-4 a.m.
Chaparral, 2715 Buford Hwy.

All Black Affair
10 p.m.-4 a.m.
Park Tavern, 500 10th St.

Party to the Max
10 p.m.-3 a.m.
Jungle
2114 Faulkner Road

ITLA 'House Vibes' dance party
11 p.m.-4 a.m.
Event Loft @ Underground Atlanta
50 Upper Alabama St.

Men R From Mars
Aug. 31
10 p.m.-6 a.m.
Atlanta Live, 3595 Clairmont Road

Women R From Venus
10 p.m.-5 a.m.
Club Miami, 3011 Buford Hwy.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 1

ITLA Living in Our Pride Health Expo
9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Sheraton Hotel

ITLA community luncheon
10:30 a.m.-noon
Sheraton Hotel

'A Total Eclipse' brunch
11 a.m.-2 p.m.
Attraxxions, 393 Marietta St.

State of Black Gay America Summit
11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Renaissance Atlanta Hotel
590 W. Peachtree St.

Pride Basketball Tournament
1-7 p.m.
Chastain Memorial Park
135 W. Wieuca Road

ITLA: A conversation with Jonathan Plummer
2-3 p.m. at the Sheraton Hotel

ITLA 'See Us in the Life' film festival
3-7:30 p.m. at the Sheraton Hotel

Falltacular Pride Party
3-8 p.m.
Joe's Crab Shack
2175 Cobb Parkway

Atlanta Wet! block party
3-8:30 p.m. at Attraxxions

Peaches & Cream hot body contest
3-8 p.m. at WETbar, 960 Spring St.

ITLA Literary Café
4-7 p.m. at the Sheraton Hotel

Glam Slam: Prelims
5-9 p.m. at the Westin Hotel

Atlanta's Life Line mixer
5:30 p.m.-midnight
Bryton Hill Clubhouse
2527 Skyland Dr.

Stanley Bennett Clay book signing
8 p.m. at Outwrite Bookstore

ITLA Poetry Slam
8-10 p.m. at the Sheraton Hotel

'Full Moon' party
10 p.m.-6 a.m.
Traxx, 1287 Columbia Dr.

12th Annual Girl Ball
10 p.m.-5 a.m.
Fox Theatre, 660 Peachtree St.

'Big Bang' girl party
11 p.m.-6 a.m., Atlanta Live

Magnum Saturday
10 p.m.-6 a.m.
Club 708, 708 Spring St.

ITLA Montreux After Dark
11 p.m.-4 a.m.
Event Loft @ Underground Atlanta

Bois Night Out party
10 p.m.-4 a.m., Playground South

'Solar Wind' grown folks party
10 p.m.-4 a.m. at Attraxxions

Meat Market party
10 p.m.-4 a.m.
Phase One, 4933 Memorial Dr.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 2

ITLA Interfaith worship service
10:30 a.m.-noon
Sheraton Hotel

Unity in the Park
11 a.m.-7 p.m. in Piedmont Park

Traxx Girls Brunch
11 a.m.-3 p.m. at Attraxxions

ITLA Jazz Brunch
Noon-3 p.m. at the Sheraton Hotel

Gospel Brunch
Noon-3 p.m.
The Sweet Down Low, 942 Peachtree

Glam Slam: Championships
5-9 p.m. at the Westin Hotel

'What My Name Iz?' comedy show
6-9 p.m. at Attraxxions

ITLA 'Living in our Pride' youth fashion show
8-10 p.m. at the Sheraton Hotel

Planet X party
9 p.m.-6 a.m. at Club Europe
4001 Presidential Parkway

Grown & Sexy party
7 p.m.-until
Django, 495 Peachtree St.

All White Affair
10:30 p.m.-4 a.m. at Park Tavern

Legendary Sunday
10 p.m.-3 a.m. at Chaparral

Mark Anthony's house party
10 p.m.-5 a.m.
3247 Kingston Road

My Girl Gotta Girlfriend party
10 p.m.-5 a.m. at Club Miami

Balenciaga Ball
11 p.m.-until at Traxx

MONDAY, SEPT. 3

ITLA Stand Up & Represent march
9:30 a.m.-noon
Gather at MLK Center
449 Auburn Ave.

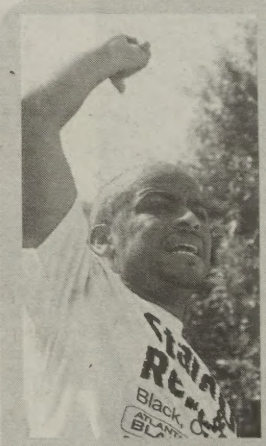
'Some Like it Hot' girl pool party
4-9 p.m.
Renaissance Atlanta Hotel

'Milky Way' white party
8 p.m.-3 a.m. at Fever Ultralounge
1789 Cheshire Bridge

Stars of the Century
10 p.m.-3 a.m. at Jungle

Dream 2007
10:30 p.m.-3 a.m.
Ice Lounge, 840 Marietta St.

Compiled by Ryan Lee



The 'Stand Up & Represent' march and rally on Labor Day caps ITLA's official Black Gay Pride events. (Photo by Bo Shell)

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Labor Day calendar packed with events for every taste

LABOR DAY, continued from **Page 29**

at the Loft, and special appearances from DJs Rick Walsh and Brian Beck at Heretic.

WETbar's "I Love the 80s" on Friday night features former New Kid on the Block Jordan Knight. WETbar's marketing director Arman Reyes says fans can expect a few numbers from Knight's NKOTB glory days, as well as numbers from his follow-up solo career.

WETbar's Saturday night features a look back at a time more recent, but nonetheless gone for good.

"We were recently graced by a visit from former Backstreet Atlanta owner Vicki Vara," he says, "and we were inspired to do a kind of throwback to the Backstreet days with a full-on DJ tag-team session featuring Bill Berdeaux and Rob Reum, two former Backstreet residents."

IN ADDITION TO THE NIGHTTIME PARTIES, Atlanta's Labor Day Weekend offers fun away from the gay party scene.

Gay tennis players from around the country converge on Atlanta for the Peach Tennis Tournament, and Lumberjack's, a gay campground in Unadilla, Ga., hosts a weekend of activities including drag legend Raven performing her infamous fire dance, once a staple of the Atlanta Pride stage.

Celebrants who are more bookish can take in a selection of gay authors at the Decatur Book Festival, including Edmund White and Fiona Zedde, all weekend in downtown Decatur. The Montreux Jazz Festival offers a chance to kick back and enjoy world-class music, and Team Gina leads the lesbian hip-hop revolution with the Heatwave Tour at Eyedrum.

Film buffs converge on the Starlight-Six Drive-In for the weekend-long Drive Invasion, and alterna-queers join the crowds browsing comic book vendors and ogling sci-fi beefcake like "Battlestar Galactica's" Jamie Bamber at the annual Dragon Con and its parade in downtown Atlanta.

MORE INFO:

Decatur Book Festival
Aug. 31 – Sept. 2
Downtown Decatur, 678-436-3237
www.decaturbookfestival.com

The Peach Tennis Tournament
Aug. 31 – Sept. 2
See website for events and locations
www.atta.org

Lumberjacks' Labor Day Weekend w/Raven's fire show
Aug. 31 – Sept. 3
Lumberjacks Campground
50 Highway 230, Unadilla, 877-888-1688
www.lumberjackscampground.com

Dragon Con
Aug. 31 – Sept. 3
Hyatt Regency Atlanta, 265 Peachtree St. NE
www.dragoncon.org

Montreux Jazz Festival
Aug. 31 – Sept. 3
See website for events and locations
www.atlantafestivals.com

'Longing, Lust, and Love' w/ Shonia Brown and contributors
Aug. 31, 8 p.m.
Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse
991 Piedmont Ave., 404-607-0082
www.outwritebooks.com

'I Love the 80s' with Jordan Knight
Aug. 31, 10 p.m.
WETbar
960 Spring St., 404-745-9494
www.wetbaratlanta.com

'Grind' with the Court of Kings
Aug. 31, 11:30 p.m.
Masquerade, 695 North Ave. NE
www.myspace.com/courtofkings

Men's Night Cabaret
Aug. 31 & Sept. 1, 8 p.m.
Onstage Atlanta
2597 N Decatur Road, 404-897-1802
www.onstageatlanta.com

Drive Invasion
Sept. 1 – 2
Starlight Six Drive-In
2000 Moreland Ave.
www.driveinvasion.com

Team Gina, Athens Boys Choir and Katastrophe
Sept. 1, 8 p.m.
Eyedrum, 290 MLK Jr Drive SE Suite 8
404-522-0655, www.eyedrum.org

Chris Cox
Sept. 1, 10 p.m.
The Loft at Center Stage, 1374 W Peachtree St. NW
www.ovahproductions.com

Bill Berdeaux and Rob Reum
Sept. 1, 10 p.m.
WETbar

Passion with DJ VanCronkhite
Sept. 1, late night
The Body Shop
2675 Johnson Road NE
www.fruitcakeproductions.com

'Voices Rising'
Sept. 2, 6 p.m.
Charis Books & More, 1189 Euclid Ave
404-524-0304
www.charisbooksandmore.com

2-T-Fruity with Ralphi Rosario
Sept. 2, 6 p.m. – 3 a.m.
Fever, 1789 Cheshire Bridge Road
www.fruitcakeproductions.com

Labor Day Bar-B-Q
Sept. 3, 4 p.m. – 6 p.m.
Friends on Ponce
736 Ponce de Leon Ave., 404-817-3820
www.friendsonponce.com

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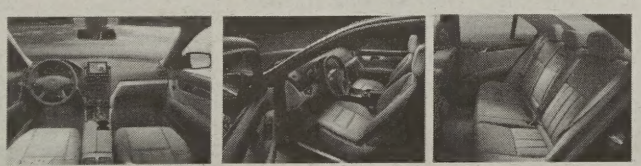

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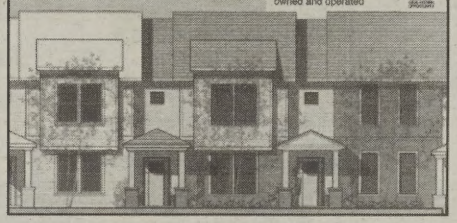

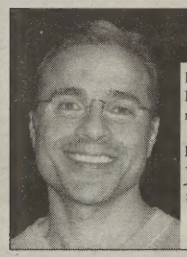

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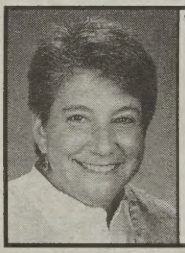

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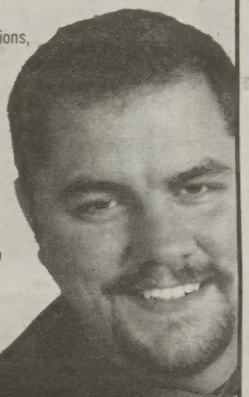

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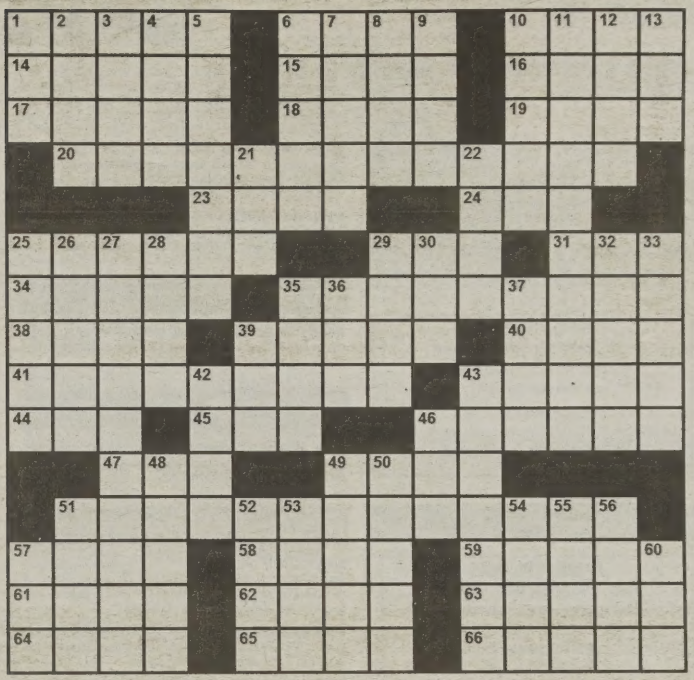

ACROSS

1. "Uh-oh!" of the Bard's day
6. Performed like a top
10. Peter I, for one
14. The No. 1 to Christopher Street
15. Painting and sculpture, to Michelangelo
16. Penetrating question?
17. Kind of dish
18. He cruised for 40 days straight
19. Ruck of "Spin City"
20. Crunchy sampler named for a gay poet?
23. End of a favorite holiday
24. U-turn from ENE
25. Like food that makes you spit
29. Sex orientation determiner, some say
31. Money back from Intl. Male
34. What you might lend Marc Antony
35. Complaint about a Gary Danko restaurant?
38. Result of getting rear-ended
39. Pissed
40. Added stipulations
41. Result of bed death?
43. Josh of "The Deep End"
44. Colette's king
45. A word from Verlaine
46. Homosexuality?
47. "Murder, ___ Meowed"
49. Cabbage, to Cocteau
51. Streisand song that bombed?
57. Heed a master
58. Coward of "Blithe Spirit"
59. Swashbuckling Flynn
61. "Marriage ___" (civil union, derogatorily)
62. Prepare for phone sex
63. Pop singer Cleo
64. Where to find Susie Bright's drawers
65. Atop
66. Billy Crudup's "___ Beauty"

DOWN

1. Mountain in "The Sound of Music"
2. MGM Studios co-founder Marcus
3. ___ fool (screw around)
4. Clergyman Bean
5. "M*A*S*H" cross-dresser
6. Vixen's master
7. They stick out in front of sailors
8. Place for Young men?
9. Old fruit drink
10. New York Liberty and Seattle Storm
11. River in the land of k.d. lang
12. ___ angle (not straight)
13. Turn tail
21. Grecian vessel
22. Christmas poem opener
25. Traffic cop's tool
26. Bridge bid, briefly
27. "Lets touch these," said Billie Jean
28. Russian singing duo
29. Pair in gay Paree
30. Barely beat
32. Come as far as
33. Like Albert, in "The Birdcage"
35. "___ Side Story"
36. Poem of Sappho
37. Romantic island for gay commitment ceremonies
39. "Alice" waitress
42. Sherman Hemsley religious sitcom
43. Crown leaves for Caesar
46. "Don't ___ step further!"
48. "Frida" star Salma
49. Spike for David Kopay
50. Greeting for Dolly
51. Award for Cherry Jones
52. Disengage, as a bra hook
53. Susan B. Anthony dollar, e.g.
54. "Nuts!"
55. Diva's piece
56. Foo ___ (Chinese omelet)
57 Gershick's "Gay ___ Girls"
60 Liberace's nickname

Answers on page 47

Druid Hills Properties for Sale

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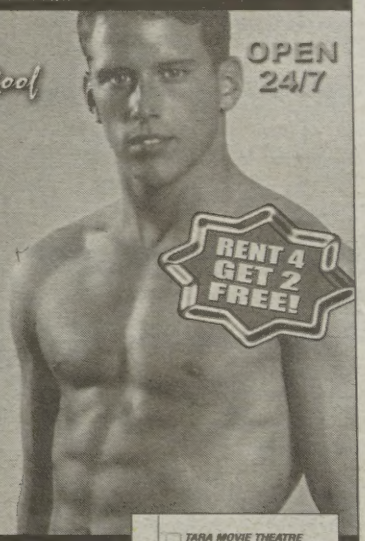

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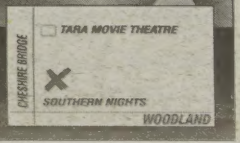

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WELL, I UH... HE! HE! YEA... UH. THANKS! I MEAN. WELL... UM... NICK'S... UH... HE'S BEEN REALLY... YOU KNOW... PUSHING ME. AT THE GYM, I MEAN.
I'LL SAY. SO WHERE IS OUR BOY, NICKY TONIGHT?
HE'S AT HOME WITH HALLE. I JUST... JUST WANTED TO GET OUT AND... YOU KNOW, SAY "HI". HEH! HEH! HI!
WELL I'M CERTAINLY GLAD YOU DID. BUT IF I WERE NICKY, I WOULDN'T LET YOU OUT OF MY SIGHT! IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
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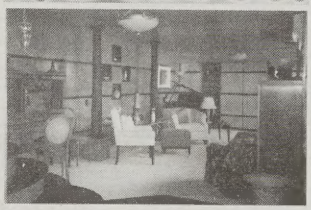

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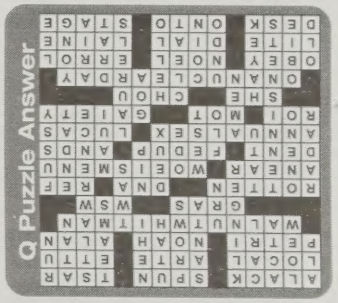

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SOUTHERN VOICE

AUGUST 29, 2008 . WWW.SOUTHERNVOICE.COM

BLACK GAY PRIDE

THOUSANDS FLOCK TO ATL TO CELEBRATE, EDUCATE. SPECIAL SECTION BEGINS ON PAGE 27

Live long and prosper: George Takei's journey from 'Star Trek' to activism. Page 35

Obama's party: Gay news from the Democratic National Convention. Page 8

Labor Day planner: The hottest nightlife events for women and men. Page 40

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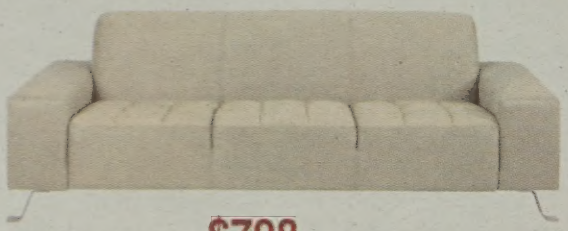

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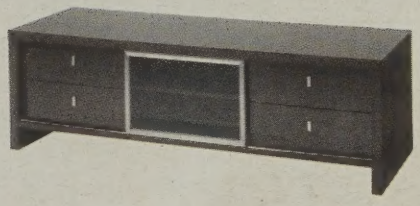

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SOUTHERN VOICE

AUG. 29 - SEPT. 4, 2008

'L Word' star **Sarah Shahi** hits ATL for Labor Day weekend. For more events, see **Page 40**

BLACK GAY PRIDE

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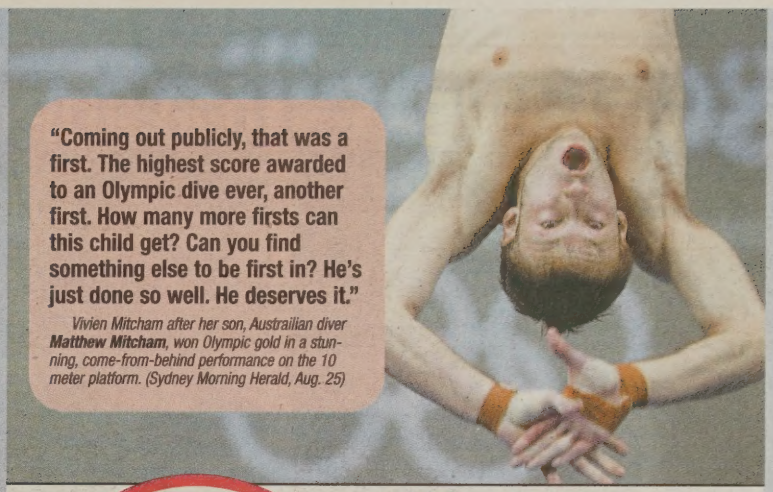
ABOUT THE COVER

Black Gay Pride performers include (from top, left to right): E. Patrick Johnson (Photo courtesy the author); Sheryl Lee Ralph (Photo by AP); Chili (Photo by AP); Alex 'Militia' Castro (Photo courtesy NBC/Mitchell Haaseth); Maurice Jamal (Photo by AP); Tweet (Photo by AP); Trina (Photo courtesy the artist); KeKe Wyatt (Photo courtesy the artist); Daryl Stephens (Photo by Michael Tompkins, courtesy LOGO Features); and Rodney Lofton (Photo courtesy the author).



"Coming out publicly, that was a first. The highest score awarded to an Olympic dive ever, another first. How many more firsts can this child get? Can you find something else to be first in? He's just done so well. He deserves it."

*Vivien Mitcham after her son, Australian diver **Matthew Mitcham**, won Olympic gold in a stunning, come-from-behind performance on the 10 meter platform. (Sydney Morning Herald, Aug. 25)*

on the record

"We just wanted things to be private. You know, neither of us had planned on meeting one another. It just kind of happened, chemistry-wise, and we wanted to keep it private."

*Recently ousted "Project Runway" designer **Daniel Feld** on his ongoing romance with fellow competitor Wesley Nault, who was bumped from the show earlier. (AfterElton.com, Aug. 21)*

"We've all given or received Hallmark Cards — remember their slogan — 'when you care enough to send the very best.' But promoting same-sex marriage for profit is not the very best for families or our nation."

*The conservative American Family Association, reacting predictably to Hallmark's decision to market **same-sex marriage cards**. (AFA press release, Aug. 21)*

"For me, the important thing wasn't about rights or the benefits. I just wanted the tribe to say 'Yes, we recognize that you are just as important as any other tribe member, and we will treat you and your spouse as we treat all tribal members."

Kitzen Branting, who will marry her partner, Jeni Branting, under tribal law after Oregon's Coquille Indian Tribe approved a statute allowing the unions. (Associated Press, Aug. 22)

"I would lie on the ground in order to block the march and would even die before I approve the Pride parade in the city."

Businessman Arcadi Gaydamak (yes, that's his real last name) on what gay Israelis can expect if he is successful in his campaign to be the next mayor of Jerusalem. (Ynetnews.com, Aug. 25)

"Although Mr. Gaydamak finds it difficult to understand the meaning of the rule of law, he should be reminded that Jerusalem is still part of the state of Israel, and thus even if he lies on the road till the next Pride parade, it won't do him any good and the march will take place."

Jerusalem Council Member Sa'ar Netanel, responding to Gaydamak's pledge to disrupt Pride. (Ynetnews.com, Aug. 25)

"You're as gay as the night is dark. You're as gay as a unicorn park."

Lyrics from "You're As Gay As the Day is Long," a song in the new film "Hamlet 2," which also includes such musical gems as "Rock me Sexy Jesus." (Associated Press. Aug. 21)

Daniel Feld (Photo by AP)

Hallmark's same-sex marriage card (Photo by AP)

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Atlanta Pride loses more than $160K

'09 venue to be made public by mid October

By MATT SCHAFER
mschafer@sovo.com

The location for Atlanta Pride 2009 will be announced on or before Oct. 11, National Coming out Day, according to Atlanta Pride organizers.

"We want to give people something to look forward to," said former festival director Jennifer Sheffield, who continues to volunteer for the event. "We know there are concerns, we know there are questions, 'Is it going to happen?' 'Is it not going to happen?' and I think the way you ease that tension is by saying this is where it's going to happen, this is when it's going to happen, get excited about it."

After an Aug. 23 meeting, the Atlanta Pride Committee's board of directors and festival committee are working on ways to rebound from a 2008 event that saw a $164,736 deficit after the festival was forced to change both venue and date just six months out.

Due to the state's severe drought, city officials booted large festivals from all city parks. Traditionally held in Piedmont Park on the last weekend of June, the 2008 Atlanta Pride festival took place over July Fourth weekend at the Civic Center.

While Atlanta Pride had a nest egg stashed away from profits made from the 2007, 2005, and 2004 festivals among others, the Pride Committee currently has a six to eight month supply of operating funds.

"If we look at our current financial standing right now, for what we have in the bank, if we look at the exact expenses, rent, one salary, storage unit, the nitty-gritty stuff, if we didn't do anything we would be around for about six months. But obviously we are going to do things," said Pride board chairperson Deirdre Heffernan. "That actually is a better picture than we first thought, so that gives us breathing room to move forward and make our plans."

Deirdre Heffernan, Atlanta Pride Committee board chair, and festival volunteer **Jennifer Sheffield** say the event needs an infusion of both volunteers and funding to thrive next year. (Heffernan photo courtesy of Heffernan; Sheffield photo by Matt Schafer)

Pride is working on two fundraisers. One is the 5,000 Foundation, where organizers hope 5,000 people will give $20 each to raise $100,000. Another fundraiser to is a bicycle race Sheffield, who left her paid position to finish her college degree, is planning for October. They are still working the details of the race, but Sheffield hopes "it will end in a park."

"Even though we had a deficit we had a heck of a Pride this year," Heffernan said. "We can't throw that out and say that one was terrible. We had great things in there. The way the AIDS Quilt was set up in that room was just a great way to present it. We had great crowds. We had people stand in the rain for hours to see the parade."

GROWING BUDGET Pride's budget grew 10 to 12 percent each year from nearly $300,000 in 1999 to $772,000 in 2008. Even with the additional cost of moving to the Atlanta Civic Center at short notice, the Pride festival only went over their budget for expenses by $4,000. But the festival's income fell dramatically.

"The two things that hurt us on the income side were our sponsorships [and attendance]," Heffernan said, thanking number of long-time sponsors. "We definitely have wonderful and loyal sponsors, we just didn't get enough new sponsors this year. The other part is what didn't show up the day of the event."

Lower attendance, driven at least in part by moving Pride to the 4th of July weekend, cut into Pride's share of vending revenue, lower donations, and merchandise sales.

Pride also lost approximately $30,000 on a "Diva's Night" on the opening day of Pride which featured Ce Ce Peniston, Frenchie Davis and others for a $25 to $50 ticket.

"We wanted to do something, and we knew were going to take a risk either way, but we took a low-level risk," Sheffield said. "Yes, we wanted to have a good concert that would get people in the door, but we didn't want to say, 'Oh my gosh, if we do poorly we could lose $200,000 or $250,000.'"

VENUE SEARCH UNDERWAY Although the Dogwood Festival is working with an Atlanta City councilman who has declined to be public on this issue in the hopes of returning all the Class A festivals - those with more than 50,000 attendees, including Atlanta Pride - to Piedmont Park, there is opposition on the council and in the city's Department of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs.

City Councilmember Anne Fauver, whose district includes Piedmont Park, has said that the decision on whether Pride and other events will be able to move back to Piedmont Park will likely come in October once the parks department has done a study on turf conditions after several smaller festivals, such as the Atlanta Arts Festival. The arts festival, slated for the weekend of Sept. 12, plans on drawing far less than 50,000 attendees, according to a festival spokesperson.

Pride has created a venue search committee to examine possible options in the metro area. While Pride is examining venues inside and outside the city, Heffernan and Sheffield said nearby hotel rooms, access to MARTA and the airport factor heavily in the decision.

"I think it's very important for people to realize that what we are doing right now is what would have been wonderful to be doing last year," Sheffield said. "You can't approach sponsors and vendors until you have your venue nailed down, and not finding out until December or January and then having to do a search as quickly as possible put us behind three or four months."

Before Pride 2008, organizers put a hold on the Civic Center for the last two weekends in June 2009. They are also considering a later date, possibly shrinking the festival from three days to two, and other options.

"As far as I'm concerned everything is on the table," Heffernan said. "We have had a lot of people say that an October festival would be nice. That would be something we could look at. We're not locked in to anything at this point."

COMMUNITY INPUT NEEDED The Atlanta Pride Committee is seeking new volunteers and increased public opinion in shaping Pride 2009.

"One thing we discussed in the [Aug. 23] meeting ... is how we need to and want to reach out to the community better than ever this year. It's almost a brand new world, we're almost an entirely volunteer organization," Heffernan said. "We need input from the community. We want everyone to feel like they have a voice in Pride next year."

Pride is looking at hosting focus groups, and/or holding an open meeting to discuss new ideas. The Pride website will change within the next few weeks to solicit more public input.

Heffernan noted that Pride isn't just looking for someone to volunteer an idea to the Pride committee via email, but for people who want to get involved.

"We're all volunteers here, just about, so if someone in the community wants to see something, let's discuss it and examine it, but let's see some commitment there, too," she said.

Atlanta Pride 2008	
Budget:	$772,000
Expenses:	$776,009
Income:	$611,273
Net Loss:	$164,736

Source: Atlanta Pride Committee

Atlanta Pride Committee
General contact:
info@atlantapride.org
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College Park church target of anti-gay threat

Episcopal congregation shocked by letter left on front door

By DYANA BAGBY
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College Park police are investigating an anti-gay note left on the doors of St. John's Episcopal Church as a "terroristic threat," according to a police report.

Father Troy Beecham, the first openly gay rector at the church, said a message stating, "homosexual priest in the pulpit in this church are an abomination! 666" was handwritten on a piece of cardboard and posted on the door for members to see when they came to church Aug. 24.

"It was found by a gay member when he unlocked the doors Sunday morning at 7 a.m. He was going to throw it away but another gay member said that I should see it," Beecham said. "I'm glad he did."

College Park is located south of downtown Atlanta near the Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport and has a population of approximately 21,000.

Beecham has been at the church for two months. He said members were in fear for their physical safety as well as shocked by the message. The church, located on Main Street, has a sizable gay membership and has never been targeted by anti-gay vandalism before, Beecham added.

"The community and congregation has been very supportive as well as shocked," Beecham said.

Officer George Williams, spokesperson for the College Park Police Department, said officers were taking the matter seriously.

"This is very rare, very rare," he said of the church vandalism. "We have several churches in the area and this is something we don't tolerate. We are investigating this very seriously to ascertain who did this."

Father **Troy Beecham**, the openly gay rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in College Park, said his congregation was appalled by an anti-gay note tacked to the church doors. (Photo courtesy St. John's Episcopal Church)

The police report names the note as a "terroristic threat/intimidation."

Georgia law states a person found guilty of terroristic threats can face up to five years in prison and a $5,000 fine.

COMPASSION ENCOURAGED

St. John's Episcopal Church members, which number close to 400 and include a regular attendance of some 150 people to Sunday services, were obviously shaken and concerned for Beecham.

"Apparently news of my arrival has spread quicker than I thought," Beecham said. "I've never had anything like this happen to me before. The note upset the whole parish. For decades, we have been open and welcoming. It boggles everyone's mind this could happen in College Park."

Beecham incorporated the anti-gay threat into his Aug. 24 sermons, he said, urging members to respond with compassion to the person who left the note.

"I feel compassion for this person because what a sad, dark world they live in," he said. "We want them here. There needs to be accountability, but we want them transformed by the love of this parish."

The sermons were well received and Beecham said he received his first-ever standing ovations.

"The support from the congregation has been overwhelming," he said.

While the frightening note may cause some to be dismayed, Beecham urged congregants to be aware but also forgiving.

"Because we are open, this is a sign we are doing something right," he said. "But is also a sign that we have a lot of work to do. Building walls around us is the last thing we want to do."

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GAY ATLANTA IN TRANSIT PART II

MARTA A LIFELINE FOR GAY YOUTH, BUT INSPIRES INSECURITY FOR SOME OLDER USERS

Editors' note: This week, Southern Voice concludes a two-part series using Atlanta's public transit system to explore the visibility and experiences of lesbian and gay people throughout the city. Part I is available online at www.sovo.com

By RYAN LEE
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As a young gay person who is integrating herself into Atlanta partly via public transportation, Marguerite van Mansfeld is inspired when she notices she's not alone.

"I see other people with their little flags, or their bandanas, or their belts or key chains, and it's really nice just to see other people on MARTA — other people in the queer community in public, out in public," said van Mansfeld, 17.

"I see more lesbian families, like family units with the happy couple and their child, on MARTA than I have seen gay male couples," she added.

Each school day, van Mansfeld walks about 15-20 minutes from her home on Atlanta's west side to the nearest train station, then boards two trains and a bus to get to her school near Emory. She also catches the train to YouthPride about three days a week, and considers it fortunate that the organization is located about 50 feet from the Inman Park/Reynoldstown train station.

"It's easier to get to because not all of the youth drive, and so it's very important the youth can get here by MARTA," she said.

YouthPride's leadership also recognizes the crucial role of MARTA for its participants, and recently discovered that 42 percent of its current members lived outside of MARTA rail coverage. To compensate, the organization is exploring having monthly meetings in outlying counties for youth who cannot catch MARTA to Inman Park, said John-Paul Griffin, director of programs at YouthPride.

"I think if we weren't as close to a MARTA station as we are, a lot of kids wouldn't be able to come to the center," said Joseph Merritt, a center attendant at YouthPride and a daily MARTA rider.

Riding MARTA to school and YouthPride instills many youth with a sense of independence and familiarity with Atlanta.

"It makes them more involved not just in the center, but in the city," said Merritt, 22.

In the three years that she's been riding public transportation, van Mansfeld has developed the same peeves that many MARTA riders share: consistently late buses, poor customer service, and the unique, stale smell in some trains and stations. She's also become accustomed to spotting other gay riders, and noticing the reaction they generate.

"It's either queer folks noticing other queer folks, or some random straight person starting mess," she said. "It's rare that someone is just asking questions that's not trying to be an ass."

Merritt also knows that MARTA is not always a safe place for gay passengers, especially expressive youth. He and some friends were recently riding to Midtown station — "the gayest train station in the city" — when another passenger began to mock them.

"There were like these straight guys or whatever on the train, and one was like, 'All these faggots on the train. Man, these faggots,'" Merritt recalled.

One of his friends responded to the homophobic heckler, but Merritt tried to laugh it off.

"It takes a lot more to offend me now, so something like faggots, I laugh at it, I think it's humorous," he said, before adding that the threat of anti-gay taunting is frustrating.

"It's almost kind of like, at certain train stations, you have to conform and you have to all of a sudden be straight just to keep from being harassed, or keep from having someone bother you and taunt you," Merritt said.

'NOT A GOOD IMAGE'

Gay and lesbian MARTA riders catch the train and bus to gay organizations like YouthPride and AID Atlanta, and to more informal institutions like Bulldogs and the Heretic. Terry Hall recently began driving after a yearlong stint of riding MARTA, but he still uses it when he goes clubbing at spots like the Trademark and Blake's on the Park.

"It's not even about the gas prices, it's more about the responsibility factor and being intoxicated," Hall said. "The only thing I don't like is how [MARTA] ends at 1 [a.m.] and the bars close at 3, that doesn't make sense."

MARTA begins service each day at 5 a.m., and a handful of clubs like Traxx and Club 708 don't close until after the morning trains and buses resume service.

"But some clubs close at 3, and we be stuck," said Marquez Montgomery, 22, who rides to clubs with his friends. "What we have to do is just wait until it starts running again."

Emmious Marshall fondly remembers being 19 and 20 years old, catching the train with friends from College Park and Buckhead to go to Club 708 in Midtown, and partying until the next morning when the trains started running. Marshall still rides MARTA daily to work and for most purposes, but no longer considers it an option for a night out on the town.

"I guess the reason we don't do it now is because we're a lot older, and I guess in the black gay community, it's just, they look at you as a nobody if you ride MARTA or catch the train," Marshall, 23, said.

INSECURITY & INDEPENDENCE

Being a MARTA rider is also a source of anxiety in Marshall's dating life.

"I just feel bad — it's just been pounded in my head a million times that, 'Oh, you ride MARTA," he said. "Like everything else could be there — you could be in school, have a job, [but guys will] be like, 'Aw, he rides MARTA, he don't have a car, oh well.'"

Finding out that a potential partner rides MARTA isn't a deal-breaker for Mike Johnson, but it may raise some red flags, he said.

"Every situation presents its own set of circumstances, but I don't think it's a disadvantage if someone rides MARTA," Johnson, 44, said. "A lot of people are doing MARTA because it's smarter, but if you're depending on MARTA because of some bad choices, that's a different conversation."

A ex-girlfriend of Mary Deibart used to ride MARTA daily, and Deibart joked that Atlanta's public transportation system is one of the few things she misses about the relationship.

"She taught me how to use the trains a little bit, and it's something that I don't do since we're not together," said Deibart, 35. "I liked her independence, and confidence, and familiarity with the city, and that's something that I really don't experience as someone who is somewhat uncertain about MARTA."

Riding MARTA may introduce tensions into gay relationships, but it is also where some relationships are born.

"I found it interesting that people were so upfront about wanting to talk with you on the train," Hall said. "I've met a couple of people on the train, actually. It's kind of like, they'll make eye contact with me, and if a seat opens one of us will move and pretend like we're trying to get some sun, or get comfortable, or get away from the person next to us because they stink — you try to make an excuse to get over there and talk to the person."

Wearing Dolce & Gabbana sunglasses, form-fitting blue jeans, a white v-neck T-shirt and a pink and blue silk scarf tied around his neck, Ricky Strong was one of about a dozen noticeably gay people waiting on a southbound train at the Lenox MARTA station on a recent Sunday afternoon. Strong boarded the train and took a seat near the door, and a young man who entered behind him looked as though he was going to continue forward to another part of the train before sitting next to Strong.

"I like your glasses," the young man said to Strong. "Where did you get them from?"

With that, the two young men started a conversation that lasted until Strong exited the train at North Avenue station — but not before they exchanged cell phone numbers.

"It's not that uncommon," Strong, 20, said at the North Avenue station. "I could tell from the way he was looking at me at the station that he wanted to say something, but I wasn't sure. We didn't say anything about being gay or attracted to one another, but obviously it was obvious that he was flirting with me, so I flirted back."

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Democrats look to November after rousing convention

Gay issues take backseat in Denver as delegates embrace Obama, Biden

By JOSHUA LYNSEN

DENVER — Invigorated by political promises and impassioned appeals, gay attendees at the Democratic National Convention this week rallied around Sen. Barack Obama in his quest to win the White House.

Gay convention delegates, elected officials and casual observers were unabashedly enthusiastic in their support for the Democratic Party and its presidential nominee, a man who has promised to enact new rights and protections for gays at the federal level.

"There's something that's profoundly moving for us and touches us to the core and says this is where we belong," said David Alan Harris, a gay Denver resident. "And here's a man who wants to label our belonging in this country in a way that's never happened before."

Hopeful that the November elections could mark an historic turning point in the gay rights movement, gay Democrats like Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) talked frequently about creating change on the national level.

"This election," he said, "if we are able to elect Barack Obama president, pick up some Senate seats, pick up some House seats, we will have the majority that will enable us to do, I think, what we want to do."

Frank told a group of gay delegates and dignitaries who gathered for lunch Tuesday that the "gay agenda" could soon be achieved.

"What's our agenda?" he said with a laugh. "We want to get married, join the Army and get a job."

Speaking at the same gathering, Michelle Obama won thunderous applause from gay Democrats when she told them "discrimination has no place in a nation founded on the promise of equality."

The wife of Barack Obama recalled how her husband once rallied neighborhood groups by challenging them to transform "the world as it is" into "the world as it should be."

She asked gay Democrats to join that quest, help her husband win in November and then rejoice together as the Defense of Marriage Act is repealed and other gay rights advancements are made.

"We can do it. And [Barack] says that in the world as it should be — what does that look like? In the world as it should be, we can work together to repeal laws like DOMA and 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,' and we can oppose divisive constitutional amendments that would strip civil rights and benefits away from LGBT Americans because discrimination has no place in a nation founded on the promise of equality."

Michelle Obama also reiterated her husband's support for the Employment Non-Discrimination Act and other gay measures pending in Congress.

"The federal government fully protects all of us in the world as it should be, including LGBT Americans, especially against hate crimes. That's the world as it should be," she said.

Stopped repeatedly during her 20-minute address by applause and cheers of support, Michelle Obama said her husband has long fought for gay civil rights, noting her husband has endorsed a complete repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act, a stance he adopted during his campaign for U.S. Senate.

But she said her husband cannot foster equality alone, and challenged gay Democrats to work with him "to make the world as it is and the world as it should be one in the same."

Gay delegates praised Michelle Obama's speech for its supportive message and genuine delivery. They also commended her willingness to address a gay audience the day after she gave her primetime convention speech.

'In the world as it should be, we can work together to repeal laws like DOMA and 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,' and we can oppose divisive constitutional amendments that would strip civil rights and benefits away from LGBT Americans because discrimination has no place in a nation founded on the promise of equality,' said **Michelle Obama** during remarks to a gay audience in Denver this week. (Photo by AP)

"The day after she gave her big speech and all the media were following her around, she came to an LGBT event," said Michael Huerta, a 22-year-old gay delegate from New Mexico. "That's pretty cool."

Huerta said he also appreciated the political risk Michelle Obama took by appearing at the luncheon.

"Even though we're in the general election and the right is out to get her and her husband, she still showed up," he said. "That more than anything is what impressed me."

GAYS 'CRITICAL' TO ELECTION

Many other speakers joined Michelle Obama in asking gay Democrats to recommit themselves to political engagement at the national and local levels.

Alice Germond, the convention's secretary, told gays at the LGBT Americans Caucus meeting Monday that their support could be key in deciding whether battleground states go red or blue in November.

"You will make that critical difference," she told the crowd. "That one percent, that two percent, that three percent that we so often win states by — and you know that. And that one percent, that two percent, could well mean the difference in target states all over this country. And not just to elect Barack Obama and Joe Biden — and we will elect them — but also we shall re-elect governors, senators, members of Congress, so that we don't have the kind of hateful legislation proposed that we have seen in the last four and eight years. We will change that."

Tim Gill, the wealthy and notoriously reclusive gay founder of Gill Action Fund, asked caucus members to join him in helping anti-gay politicians find new jobs.

"Rick Santorum was a wonderful example of a man who needed a change in career," he said to laughter and applause. "All of us banded together to make it happen. And there are thousands of people in this nation that are really in need of a new career."

Gill told the convention's 275 openly gay delegates they were right to push for change at the national level. But the man who's poured millions into the campaigns of pro-gay state legislators said change must also be sought at the local level.

Rick Stafford, chair of the LGBT Americans Caucus, told gay delegates they also must return home with plans and tell everyone they know why Barack Obama would make a better president than the presumptive Republican nominee, Sen. John McCain.

"It is our job, when we leave here and go back home, to talk to all of our community, Republicans, independents — as well as Democrats, and new Democrats, young Democrats — about John McCain and what kind of an administration he would bring."

Frank said McCain is no better on gay issues "than Rick Santorum," declining to back even the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, a federal proposal that would bar most businesses from firing an employee solely because he or she is gay.

"He has never voted — never voted — for anything that would advance our people's equality," Frank said. "Not for hate crimes, not for ENDA, with or without transgender, or hate crimes, with or without transgender. He has never voted for it. He is a staunch opponent still of changing the ban on gay service members when other people have now said that the time has come to change it."

LIMITED FLOOR TIME

Although discussed often in meetings and gatherings, gay issues received little attention from those who spoke during the convention's main gatherings at the Pepsi Center.

Neither of the two openly gay speakers to reach the podium dwelled on gay issues. Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), a lesbian, did not mention her sexual orientation or discuss gay issues when she spoke Tuesday about the rising cost of health care. Andy Tobias, the Democratic National Committee's treasurer, mentioned his sexual orientation during his remarks Monday.

"As a gay man," he said, "I yearn for a president who believes in equal rights for all Americans."

A notable mention of gay issues on the convention floor came from Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.).

"Barack Obama will close the book on the old politics of race and gender and group against group and straight against gay," he said.

Hillary Clinton also made a passing reference to gays in her Tuesday night speech when she mentioned her fight for "civil rights to labor rights, from women's rights to gay rights."

Despite such limited attention, many gay delegates said they were not disappointed that convention organizers chose only two openly gay speakers after allowing six to take the stage in 2004.

"I didn't even know that statistic, because it's not to me paramount and relevant," said Judy Baker, a lesbian alternate delegate from New Mexico. "I don't think it signals anything, really. When you line up people from around the United States and you have a limited number of time, you want to get the most influential and the most public people that you can to be your featured speakers."

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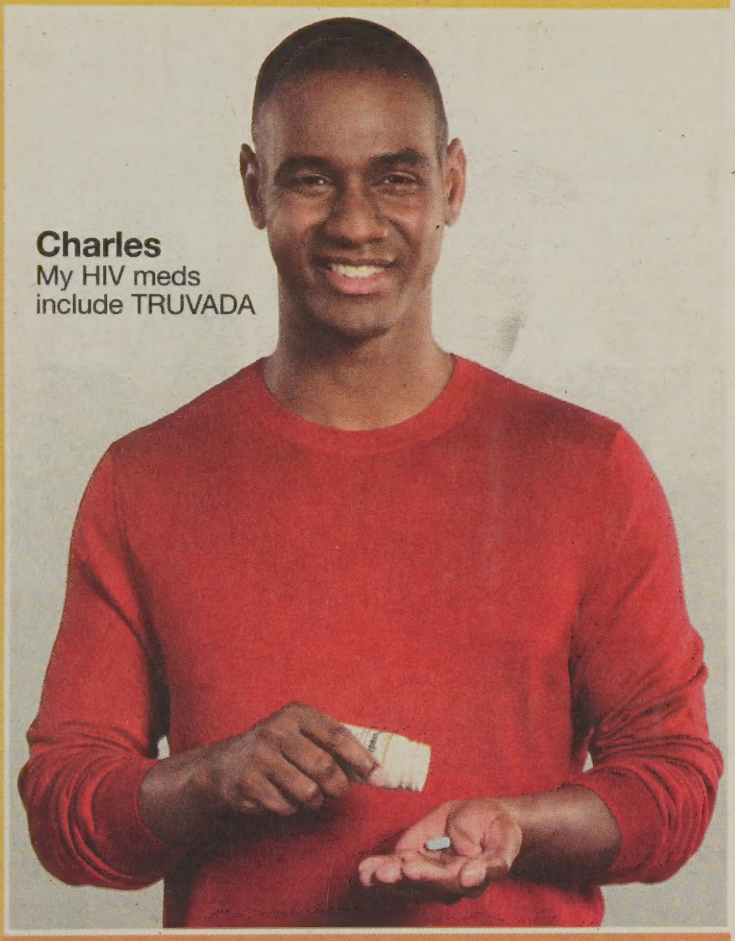

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References: 1. Based on data from PHAST retail monthly data; September 2005-January 2008; Wolters Kluwer Health. **2.** Truvada [prescribing information]. Foster City, CA: Gilead Sciences, Inc.; May 2008.

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- Established long-term safety and tolerability*[2]

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Ask your doctor about TRUVADA and go to www.TRUVADA.com.

Truvada®

200 mg emtricitabine · tenofovir disoproxil fumarate 300 mg

*Through 3 years in Gilead Study 934.[2]

Think long term.* Starting now.

Patient Information

TRUVADA® (tru-VAH-dah) tablets

Generic name: emtricitabine and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate
(em tri SIT uh bean and te NOE' fo veer dye soe PROX il FYOU mar ate)

Read the Patient Information that comes with TRUVADA before you start taking it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This information does not take the place of talking to your healthcare provider about your medical condition or treatment. You should stay under a healthcare provider's care when taking TRUVADA. **Do not change or stop your medicine without first talking with your healthcare provider.** Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you have any questions about TRUVADA.

What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?

- **Some people who have taken medicine like TRUVADA (nucleoside analogs) have developed a serious condition called lactic acidosis** (build up of an acid in the blood). Lactic acidosis can be a medical emergency and may need to be treated in the hospital. **Call your healthcare provider right away if you get the following signs or symptoms of lactic acidosis.**
  - You feel very weak or tired.
  - You have unusual (not normal) muscle pain.
  - You have trouble breathing.
  - You have stomach pain with nausea and vomiting.
  - You feel cold, especially in your arms and legs.
  - You feel dizzy or lightheaded.
  - You have a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Some people who have taken medicines like TRUVADA have developed serious liver problems called hepatotoxicity,** with liver enlargement (hepatomegaly) and fat in the liver (steatosis). **Call your healthcare provider right away if you get the following signs or symptoms of liver problems.**
  - Your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice).
  - Your urine turns dark.
  - Your bowel movements (stools) turn light in color.
  - You don't feel like eating food for several days or longer.
  - You feel sick to your stomach (nausea).
  - You have lower stomach area (abdominal) pain.
- **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or liver problems** if you are female, very overweight (obese), or have been taking nucleoside analog medicines, like TRUVADA, for a long time.
- **If you are also infected with the Hepatitis B Virus (HBV),** you need close medical follow-up for several months after stopping treatment with TRUVADA. Follow-up includes medical exams and blood tests to check for HBV that could be getting worse. **Patients with Hepatitis B Virus infection, who take TRUVADA and then stop it, may get "flare-ups" of their hepatitis. A "flare-up" is when the disease suddenly returns in a worse way than before.**

What is TRUVADA?

TRUVADA is a type of medicine called an HIV-1 (human immunodeficiency virus) nucleoside analog reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NRTI). TRUVADA contains 2 medicines, EMTRIVA® (emtricitabine) and VIREAD® (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate, or tenofovir DF) combined in one pill. TRUVADA is always used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines to treat people with HIV-1 infection. TRUVADA is for adults age 18 and older. TRUVADA has not been studied in children under age 18 or adults over age 65.

HIV infection destroys $CD4^+$ T cells, which are important to the immune system. The immune system helps fight infection. After a large number of T cells are destroyed, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) develops.

TRUVADA helps block HIV-1 reverse transcriptase, a chemical in your body (enzyme) that is needed for HIV-1 to multiply. TRUVADA lowers the amount of HIV-1 in the blood (viral load). TRUVADA may also help to increase the number of T cells ($CD4^+$ cells). Lowering the amount of HIV-1 in the blood lowers the chance of death or infections that happen when your immune system is weak (opportunistic infections).

TRUVADA does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS. The long-term effects of TRUVADA are not known at this time. People taking TRUVADA may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV-1 infection. Opportunistic infections are infections that develop because the immune system is weak. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, and *Mycobacterium avium complex* (MAC) infection. **It is very important that you see your healthcare provider regularly while taking TRUVADA.**

TRUVADA does not lower your chance of passing HIV-1 to other people through sexual contact, sharing needles, or being exposed to your blood. For your health and the health of others, it is important to always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom or other barrier to lower the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood. Never use or share dirty needles.

Who should not take TRUVADA?

- Do not take TRUVADA if you are allergic to TRUVADA or any of its ingredients. The active ingredients of TRUVADA are emtricitabine and tenofovir DF. See the end of this leaflet for a complete list of ingredients.
- Do not take TRUVADA if you are already taking ATRIPLA®, Combivir (lamivudine/zidovudine), EMTRIVA, Epivir or Epivir-HBV (lamivudine), Epzicom (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine), Trizivir (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine), or VIREAD because these medicines contain the same or similar active ingredients.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA?

Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- **are pregnant or planning to become pregnant.** We do not know if TRUVADA can harm your unborn child. You and your healthcare provider will need to decide if TRUVADA is right for you. If you use TRUVADA while you are pregnant, talk to your healthcare provider about how you can be on the TRUVADA Antiviral Pregnancy Registry.
- **are breast-feeding.** You should not breast feed if you are HIV-positive because of the chance of passing the HIV virus to your baby. Also, it is not known if TRUVADA can pass into your breast milk and if it can harm your baby. If you are a woman who has or will have a baby, talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby.
- **have kidney problems or are undergoing kidney dialysis treatment.**
- **have bone problems.**
- **have liver problems including Hepatitis B Virus infection.**

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Especially tell your healthcare provider if you take:

- Videx, Videx EC (didanosine). Tenofovir DF (a component of TRUVADA) may increase the amount of Videx in your blood. **You may need to be followed more carefully if you are taking TRUVADA and Videx together.** Also, the dose of didanosine may need to be reduced.
- Reyataz (atazanavir sulfate) or Kaletra (lopinavir/ritonavir). These medicines may increase the amount of tenofovir DF (a component of TRUVADA) in your blood, which could result in more side effects. You may need to be followed more carefully if you are taking TRUVADA and Reyataz or Kaletra together. TRUVADA may decrease the amount of Reyataz in your blood. If you are taking TRUVADA and Reyataz together, you should also be taking Norvir (ritonavir).

Keep a complete list of all the medicines that you take. Make a new list when medicines are added or stopped. Give copies of this list to all of your healthcare providers and pharmacist **every** time you visit your healthcare provider or fill a prescription.

How should I take TRUVADA?

- Take TRUVADA exactly as your healthcare provider prescribed it. Follow the directions from your healthcare provider, exactly as written on the label.
- The usual dose of TRUVADA is 1 tablet once a day. TRUVADA is always used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines. If you have kidney problems, you may need to take TRUVADA less often.
- TRUVADA may be taken with or without a meal. Food does not affect how TRUVADA works. Take TRUVADA at the same time each day.
- If you forget to take TRUVADA, take it as soon as you remember that day. **Do not** take more than 1 dose of TRUVADA in a day. **Do not** take 2 doses at the same time. Call your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you are not sure what to do. **It is important that you do not miss any doses of TRUVADA or your anti-HIV-1 medicines.**
- When your TRUVADA supply starts to run low, get more from your healthcare provider or pharmacy. This is very important because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may develop resistance to TRUVADA and become harder to treat.
- Do not change your dose or stop taking TRUVADA without first talking with your healthcare provider. Stay under a healthcare provider's care when taking TRUVADA.

- If you take too much TRUVADA, call your local poison control center or emergency room right away.

What should I avoid while taking TRUVADA?

- **Do not breast-feed.** See "What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA?"
- **Avoid doing things that can spread HIV infection** since TRUVADA does not stop you from passing the HIV infection to others.
  - **Do not share needles or other injection equipment.**
  - **Do not share personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them, like toothbrushes or razor blades.**
  - **Do not have any kind of sex without protection.** Always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom or other barrier to reduce the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood.
- ATRIPLA, Combivir (lamivudine/zidovudine), EMTRIVA, Epivir or Epivir-HBV (lamivudine), Epzicom (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine), Trizivir (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine), or VIREAD.

TRUVADA should not be used with these medicines.

What are the possible side effects of TRUVADA?

TRUVADA may cause the following serious side effects (see "What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?"):

- **Lactic acidosis** (buildup of an acid in the blood). Lactic acidosis can be a medical emergency and may need to be treated in the hospital. **Call your doctor right away if you get signs of lactic acidosis.** (See "What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?")
- **Serious liver problems (hepatotoxicity),** with liver enlargement (hepatomegaly) and fat in the liver (steatosis). Call your healthcare provider right away if you get any signs of liver problems. (See "What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?")

- **"Flare-ups" of Hepatitis B Virus infection,** in which the disease suddenly returns in a worse way than before, can occur if you stop taking TRUVADA. Your healthcare provider will monitor your condition for several months after stopping TRUVADA if you have both HIV-1 and HBV infection. TRUVADA is not approved for the treatment of Hepatitis B Virus infection.
- **Kidney problems.** If you have had kidney problems in the past or take other medicines that can cause kidney problems, your healthcare provider should do regular blood tests to check your kidneys.
- **Changes in bone mineral density (thinning bones).** It is not known whether long-term use of TRUVADA will cause damage to your bones. If you have had bone problems in the past, your healthcare provider may need to do tests to check your bone mineral density or may prescribe medicines to help your bone mineral density.

Other side effects with TRUVADA when used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines include:

- Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients taking TRUVADA and other anti-HIV-1 medicines. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the main part of your body (trunk). Loss of fat from the legs, arms and face may also happen. The cause and long term health effect of these conditions are not known at this time.

The most common side effects of EMTRIVA or VIREAD when used with other anti HIV-1 medicines are: diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, dizziness and headache. Additional side effects are stomach pain, indigestion, gas, inflammation of the pancreas, increased amylase, sleeping problems, abnormal dreams, weakness, pain, low blood phosphate, shortness of breath, increase liver enzymes, inflammation of the liver, allergic reaction, muscle problems and rash. Skin discoloration (small spots or freckles) may also happen with TRUVADA.

These are not all the side effects of TRUVADA. This list of side effects with TRUVADA is **not complete** at this time because TRUVADA is still being studied. If you have questions about side effects, ask your healthcare provider. Report any new or continuing symptoms to your healthcare provider right away. Your healthcare provider may be able to help you manage these side effects.

How do I store TRUVADA?

- **Keep TRUVADA and all other medicines out of reach of children.**
- Store TRUVADA at room temperature 77 °F (25 °C).
- Keep TRUVADA in its original container and keep the container tightly closed.
- Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. If you throw any medicines away make sure that children will not find them.

General information about TRUVADA:

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for conditions that are not mentioned in patient information leaflets. Do not use TRUVADA for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give TRUVADA to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

This leaflet summarizes the most important information about TRUVADA. If you would like more information, talk with your health-care provider. You can ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for information about TRUVADA that is written for health professionals. For more information, you may also call 1-800-GILEAD-5 or access the TRUVADA website at www.TRUVADA.com.

Do not use TRUVADA if seal over bottle opening is broken or missing.

What are the ingredients of TRUVADA?

Active Ingredients: emtricitabine and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate

Inactive Ingredients: Croscarmellose sodium, lactose monohydrate, magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose, and pregelatinized starch (gluten free). The tablets are coated with Opadry II Blue Y-30-10701 containing FD&C Blue #2 aluminum lake, hydroxypropyl methylcellulose 2910, lactose monohydrate, titanium dioxide, and triacetin.

Rx Only

May 2008

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PROUD MEMBER OF ARCSA

Biden called a 'proven advocate' for gay rights

Obama VP pick supports civil unions, repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'

By LOU CHIBBARO JR.

Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama's decision to pick Sen. Joe Biden (D-Del.) as his vice presidential running mate drew immediate praise from gay activists in Delaware, who called Biden a strong and reliable friend of the gay community.

After more than two months of deliberation over selecting a vice presidential nominee, Obama announced Biden's selection shortly after 3 a.m. Aug. 23 in text messages and e-mails sent to his campaign supporters.

Although Biden, 65, has not signed on as a co-sponsor for as many gay-related bills as activists would have liked, he has voted for gay-supportive legislation and against anti-gay measures nearly every time such legislation came before the Senate during his 35-year tenure as a senator, according to Delaware activists.

"You won't see him taking the lead on gay issues, but whenever there is a vote, he's always with us," said Peter Schott, president of the Stonewall Democratic Club of Delaware, a gay rights group.

Last year, after announcing his candidacy for president, Biden joined other Democratic presidential candidates, including Obama, in expressing support for an employment non-discrimination bill that includes both gays and transgender persons.

"We have reason to think he's very positive on all LGBT issues," said Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality.

In a questionnaire sent to all presidential candidates by the Human Rights Campaign, Biden also indicated, similar to Obama, that he supports civil unions for same-sex couples rather than marriage rights.

Biden dropped out of the presidential race earlier this year after losing to Obama and other candidates in the early primaries.

In his role as chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Biden has been credited with shepherding through the Senate earlier this year a sweeping global AIDS relief bill that includes a provision repealing the U.S. ban on HIV-positive visitors and immigrants.

HRC gave Biden a rating of 78 out of a possible 100 in its most recent congressional scorecard on gay- and AIDS-related issues, which covered the years 2005-2006. Biden lost points in the rating, according to HRC, because he didn't sign on as a co-sponsor to the Uniting American Families Act, which would allow same-sex partners of U.S. citizens who are foreign nationals to obtain the same immigration benefits as foreigners who are married spouses of U.S. citizens. Delaware activists have said they believe Biden would vote for the bill if it reaches the Senate floor.

Gay activists praised Sen. **Barack Obama**'s selection of Sen. **Joe Biden** (D-Del.) as his vice presidential running mate. (Photo by AP)

Over the past 20 years, Biden's HRC scorecard rating varied from a perfect 100 to a 63.

In recent years, Biden has voted for hate crimes legislation and against a constitutional amendment calling for banning same-sex marriage. As a candidate for president earlier this year, Biden said he favors repealing the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, which bans gays from serving openly in the U.S. military.

In 1994, Biden broke ranks with many of his Republican and Democratic colleagues by voting for an amendment to prevent the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy from being enacted into law. Biden's only significant vote against the interests of gay rights came in 1996, when he joined many of his Democratic colleagues in voting for the Defense of Marriage Act, which defines marriage under federal law as a union only between one man and one woman.

Information compiled by HRC shows that between 1990 and 2000, Biden voted for three separate versions of hate crimes bills that included protections for gays. "In selecting Sen. Joe Biden as his running mate, Sen. Obama has chosen a proven and effective advocate for fairness and equality that our entire community can be proud of," said HRC President Joe Solmonese.

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VIEWPOINT

Thank you, Oprah

By staying true to Miss Celie and Shug Avery's love, 'The Color Purple' helped challenge black homophobia

By D. DIONNE BATES

MY GIRLFRIEND AND I RECENTLY WENT TO SEE Oprah Winfrey's presentation of Alice Walker's "The Color Purple" at the Fox Theatre. I must admit that when I heard that a musical was made to depict one of the best books and films of the 20th century, I was not at all excited.

I know it is Oprah, but given the subject matter of the story, I could not (no, I would not) allow myself to believe that someone (not even Oprah) would be bold enough to tell the story on stage and stay authentic to the book when covering issues such as infanticide, domestic violence, incest, infidelity, racial and religious oppression, patriarchy, misogyny, love, and yes, even same-sex love.

The film, which premiered in 1985, became one of my favorites. I can quote it line for line, from infamous lines like, "It's gon' rain on yo' head," to more subtle lines like, "See Daddy. Sinners have souls too." I was 14 years old when the film premiered and since then I have seen it innumerable times. It would be another nine years before I would read Alice Walker's "The Color Purple" and, as many times as I had seen the film, only then did some of the scenes make sense.

The book helped me better understand the scene where Shug Avery and Miss Celie kiss, as well as one of the last scenes where they appear to live together. The meaning of the kiss was always "fuzzy" to me, but I can remember reading the book and saying out loud, "Oh! Now, I get it!"

The kiss between Shug and Miss Celie was not just endearing (as the film would lead one to believe). The kiss was that of love, as well as a deep intimacy that Shug and Miss Celie were not able to have with men in the patriarchal, misogynist and religiously oppressed society of the era.

Women were considered property to their husbands and in the absence of love, sex, in most instances, was considered an obligation. But Shug and Miss Celie developed a relationship that transcended the bounds of that obligation and the oppression that being in relationships with men dictated. They discovered a true, genuine, intimate love that both of them had never been privileged to have as the property of men.

Today, we call their kind of love "same-sex love" or homosexuality.

Angela Robinson (left) and **Jeanette Bayardelle** played Shug Avery and Miss Celie in the stage version of 'The Color Purple.' (Photo by Paul Kolnik)

BLACK HOMOSEXUAL, BISEXUAL, AND TRANS-gender individuals (e.g. LGBT) are often abhorred in African-American society. As a black lesbian, I have been subjected to homophobia within the African-American community, as have many of my black LGBT brothers and sisters.

There are several factors that contribute to the perpetuation of homophobia within the African-American community, including patriarchal attitudes, misogyny, misinterpretations of biblical Scripture, mis-education, and lack of education about our culture that we were forced to abandon during the Diaspora, to name a few.

As a licensed mental health clinician, I often explain to my patients and their families that same-sex love is not merely about sex, but intimacy and love. Many of the women whom I see, who have been married or once identified as heterosexual, often cite a deep level of intimacy as a predominant (though not the only) factor in the transition of their heterosexual identity to lesbian/bisexual identity.

Though many enjoyed sex with men, most did not experience this level of intimacy in their relationships with men: Unfortunately, however, many of my African-American patients have more difficulty than my Caucasian patients, who face the same issue, resolving their lesbian/bisexual identity due to fear of not being accepted and affirmed in the African-American community — the same community that is important to them, in which they hold strong ties, and where they have been accepted when they could not find acceptance anywhere else.

PERHAPS IN 1985, STEVEN SPIELBERG — DIRECTOR of the film "The Color Purple" — and Hollywood felt that America was not ready for the "real" story behind Shug's and Miss Celie's relationship.

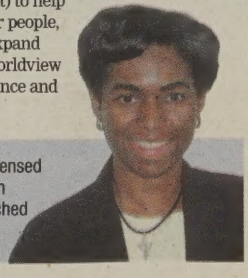
Quite honestly, I am not sure that straight black America is any more ready for the real story. I am happy to say, however, that Oprah Winfrey kept the storyline between these two characters true to the book and African-American people who went to see the musical were forced to grapple with their discomfort over Shug's and Miss Celie's relationship, and in essence concede to their homophobia.

Not only did these characters share an intimate kiss on stage, the storyline between the two was reaffirmed as Shug confessed her love for Miss Celie while begging to allow her, in six months, to come back to Miss Celie after going out on the road with a young man.

As I sat in the second row, center stage, I could not help but notice the reflective quietness and tenseness of the predominantly African-American (and likely mostly heterosexual) audience during this scene and the scene of the intimate kiss. Oprah's rendition of the book also demonstrated how uplifted a people and a community can be in the midst of attitude and social change, as well as in the affirmation of a peaceful and loving collective and individual existence.

By the end of the story, Harpo had broken the cycle of domestic violence and patriarchy as he demonstrated an authentic, respectful and reciprocal love for Sophia. Mister's attitude about women began to change as he took care of his ill granddaughter and tried to make amends to Miss Celie for his abusive treatment of her and taking away her sister Nettie. And Miss Celie, a Black woman, owned a successful pants business and lived out her days with her sister, her children, and the love of her life, Shug Avery.

I don't know how much one story will change African-Americans' attitudes about same-sex love, albeit one of the greatest love stories in history. But, Oprah, I would like to thank you for using your influence (even it if was inadvertent) to help my people, your people, our people to expand further their worldview of love, acceptance and affirmation.



D. Dionne Bates is a licensed mental health clinician in Atlanta. She can be reached through this publication.

FRIEND or FOE

Del Martin (left) and **Phyllis Lyon** (right). (Photo by AP)

FRIEND

Del Martin, a pioneer in the gay rights movement, died Aug. 27 in San Francisco with her wife, Phyllis Lyon, at her side. She was 87.

Martin and Lyon were the first same-sex couple married in California on June 16, 2008, after the state Supreme Court ruled gay marriage legal in May.

The couple was together for 55 years and were an inspiration to lesbians, feminists and civil rights activists around the world for their tireless efforts to ensure gay people after them received the rights denied to them when they were young.

Martin and Lyon and several other lesbians formed the first lesbian advocacy organization, Daughters of Bilitis, in 1955 and never slowed down, including being plaintiffs in recent lawsuits that eventually led to overturning the ban on gay marriage in that state.

Together the couple also co-authored the groundbreaking book, "Lesbian/Woman" in 1972.

Rest in peace, Del. The world is better off because of your amazing contributions.

FOE

There are always so many gay rights foes to pick from every week, but those in California fighting to again have same-sex marriage banned in that state — thereby posthumously "unmarrying" Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon — deserve the ire of all gay Americans, especially this week in the wake of Martin's death.

How can the people in favor of Proposition 8 ignore the love these two women shared and deny it for future generations?

Love is love. Del and Phyllis proved that by living their lives openly, honestly and courageously.

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soapbox

Three ways to make your Southern Voice heard: Send letters to **editor@sovo.com**. • Visit **www.sovo.com** and click "Sound Off." • Use **"Comments"** sections following each story online.

SOUND OFF

Gay voters shouldn't back Obama or McCain

Re: "Obama campaign reaches out to gay Georgians" (news, Aug. 15)

I urge every Hillary and Barack supporter to not just vote for a candidate because they have a D in front of their name and accept the same two tired options of what democracy looks like. Support a change beyond gender and skin color and support the hometown girl that opposes both wars, FISA, supports gay marriage and real universal healthcare — Cynthia Mckinney and the Greens.

So the Obama campaign reaches out to gay Georgians — I'm waiting for him to reach out again and tell all of us how marriage is between a man and a woman. Gay folk need to wake up and realize that they're being used and abused. The lesser of two evils remains evil. It is beyond me why more gays and lesbians do not support the Libertarian candidates.

Does Obama really have a chance to win Ga. in Nov.?

Re: "Obama campaign reaches out to gay Georgians" (news, Aug. 15)

Great story,but sorry, folks. I'll be the cynical guy saying what half of us are thinking: No, not even the power of pink, which has shown little ability to band together anyway, can turn Georgia blue.

It's not impossible. Even if all Obama does is make McCain have to spend money in Georgia, at least we get some attention from the presidential candidates. They ignored us in 2004 — all that mattered was a few "swing" states.

To make every vote in every state politically relevant and equal in presidential elections, support the National Popular Vote bill. The National Popular Vote bill would guarantee the presidency to the candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states (and DC). The bill would take effect only when enacted by states possessing a majority of the electoral votes (270 of 538). When the bill comes into effect, all the electoral votes from those states would be awarded to the presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states. Check it out at www.NationalPopularVote.com

Atlanta Pride should focus on Piedmont, then fundraising

Re: "Atlanta Pride pleads for donations" (Sovo.com, Aug. 13)

Until I see some real tangible effort on the part of the Atlanta Pride Committee to get the festival back into Piedmont Park where it belongs, they'll get not one penny from me. This year's Pride was disappointing to say the least despite all the posturing and "assurances" from the committee. The Atlanta City Council and the Pride Committee should wake up and smell the coffee so to speak. If we continue to bar the festival from the park both the city and the committee will lose profits.

I sure bet that the Pride Committee wouldn't have a problem now accepting that $5,000 donation from the HRC they refused earlier in the year.

Thank God Donna Narducci has stepped down [as executive director]. Atlanta being one of the largest cities in the country, kind of sad that Atlanta Pride has gone downhill. It's due time for fresh ideas and a new face.

MAILBOX

Atlantans should help Fla. ballot fight before Calif.

To the Editors:

Re: "Atlanta helps fight anti-gay measures out west" (news, Aug. 15)

I was more than shocked to read this story in Southern Voice. Florida is also facing a constitutional amendment in November trying to add a ban to any same-sex benefit to the Florida constitution. But no mention of that in this story.

There are several groups fighting Amendment 2 including Florida Red & Blue and Fairness for All Families with a nationwide coalition. This amendment doesn't just concern the LGBT community who could lose domestic partner benefits, but also the elderly and domestic violence victims. Supporters of Amendment 2 need 60 percent to pass and it is close.

We are organizing trainings across the state of Florida to get people trained to fight this amendment. Same-sex marriage is already illegal in Florida so the amendment is unnecessary and mean-spirited.

Granted, California is more sexy that Florida , but Florida is Georgia's neighbor and playground.

So instead of giving money to California and Arizona, consider Florida first. I take issue with the fact a "host committee for the fundraiser features a who's who of gay and lesbian leaders in Atlanta, including the heads of several local gay non-profit organizations" will be raising money for state ballots across the country.

There is a lot of money in California and Arizona. So why not fight for your neighbor? Other than the obvious reasons...

I am as concerned about California and Arizona as any other activist but wonder about the priorities of the organizers. Even "Ads by Google" can see the joke here: their first ad on the SoVo's webpage advertised www.SayNo2.com in Florida!

So support www.SayNo2.com and www.fairnessforallfamilies.org to fight Amendment 2 in Florida.

TOM DEMPSEY
Pensacola, Fla.

Editors' note: The article in question focused on Atlantans holding or participating in major fundraisers for ballot measures in California and Arizona.

I GOT NOTHIN' AGAINST LUKE AND BRIAN AS NEIGHBORS... BUT EVERY TIME I SEE 'EM, I CAN'T SHAKE THE IMAGE OF THE TWO OF THEM HAVING SEX TOGETHER!
I HAVE THE SAME PROBLEM WHENEVER I SEE YOU AND MILDRED.
e-mail: EditorialCartoons@gsyndicate.com
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THE Q

The annual Dragon*Con sci-fi confab hits Atlanta this weekend. Which 'Star Trek' character or actor would you want to date?

"Dr. Crusher, because she's sexy."
Nikki Garrison, 21
Marietta

"Shatner. I want Shat because he's a top."
Graham Best, 33
Midtown

"Jean-Luc Picard, just so I could say my boy friend is named Jean-Luc and he is captain of a space ship."
Todd Pye, 23
Midtown

"Shatner, because he's a nice Jewish boy."
Jonathan Shapiro
50, Midtown

"Spock, because we could have deep conversations, or better yet he could use his mind meld on me."
Jill Fling, 43
Austell

Compiled by Matt Schafer

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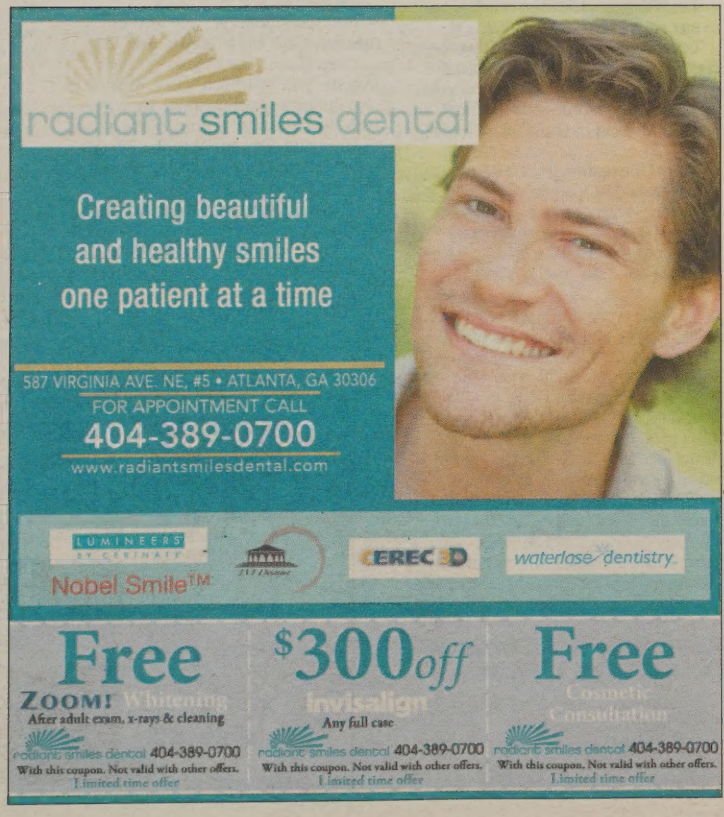

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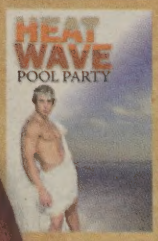

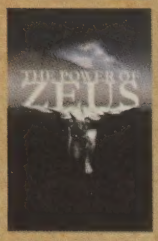

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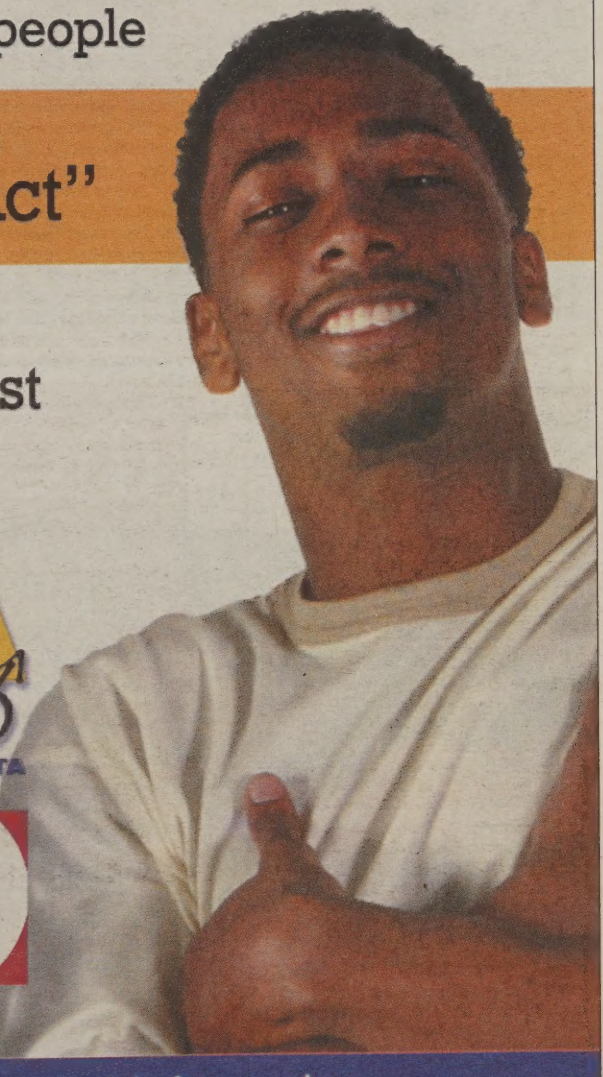

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SOUTHERN VOICE COMMUNITY

FRIDAY, AUG. 29

In the Life Atlanta hosts the opening ceremony for Black Gay Pride. 8 p.m. to 10 p.m., W Midtown, 188 14 St. www.inthelifeatl.com. **For a complete calendar of Black Gay Pride events, see Page 33.**

Meet the models of the 2008-2009 **She-Stud** calendar at a signing party at Charis Books & More. 8 p.m. 1189 Euclid Ave. 404-524-0304, www.charisbooksandmore.com

FRIDAY, AUG. 29 - SUNDAY, AUG. 31

In the Life Atlanta presents the annual **Black Gay Pride** celebration with workshops and parties. Throughout Atlanta. Visit inthelifeatl.org for more information.

Decatur Books Festival celebrates at various locations throughout Decatur. Participants include gay authors Kevin Sessums, Louis Bayard and local favorites Fiona Zedde and Mark King. www.decaturbookfestival.com

SATURDAY, AUG. 30

YouthPride and In the Life Atlanta host a **Back to School Dance** at the W Hotel in Midtown, 188 14th St. NE. 8 p.m. – 11:55 p.m. Email joseph@youthpride.org or call 404-521-9711.

The annual **Asian & Friends Pageant** takes place. 7 p.m. at Burkhart's, 1492-F Piedmont Ave. 404-872-4403, www.burkharts.com. Pool party: www.anfatlanta.com

SUNDAY, AUG. 31

Doria Roberts performs as part of the MixHer series at Vino Libro, part of Black Gay Pride. 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. 933 Garrett St. SE, 404-624-3644, www.vinolibro.com

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 3

Singer, songwriter and novelist **Stewart Lewis** comes to Outwrite Books & More to read and sign his new book, "Relative Stranger." 7:30 p.m. 991 Piedmont Ave. www.outwritebooks.com

THURSDAY, SEPT. 4

Benefit show for AID Gwinnett at Bellissima featuring Brent Star. 506-B Amsterdam Ave., 9 p.m. www.myspace.com/bellissima_lounge

ON THE WEB:
For other calendars of special events, visit www.sovo.com.

TO ADD A LISTING...
e-mail calendar@sovo.com, call 404-876-1819, ext. 23, or fax to 404-876-2709, attn: Rob Beck. Entries should be submitted at least 14 days in advance of publication date.

Man enough

Atlanta Cotillion debutantes raise funds to fight AIDS

By DYANA BAGBY
dbagby@sovo.com

THESE MEN ARE DEFINITELY MAN ENOUGH — man enough to strap on a pair of heels, slip into a formal gown and don a wig of big hair.

They are the debutantes of Atlanta Cotillion VII, gay men who have raised money all summer for AID Atlanta. They will showcase their attire as they seek to be crowned the Queen of the Cotillion Ball, an honor that goes to the man who raised the most money through several parties and events all summer.

Ball attendees must also dress in female formal attire "regardless of gender or sexual orientation," except for a maximum of 200 "gentlemen" who will be admitted in black tie. Cotillion organizers will not allow women to attend in tuxedoes.

Tickets are $75 for those wearing women's clothing; $150 for men in tuxedoes. Tickets must be purchased online by Friday, Sept. 5.

This year's event takes on a different approach than in years' past with the theme "Un Ballo in Maschera," or "A Masked Ball," with attendees encouraged to wear Venetian masks, says Cotillion Chair Edward Holifield, who has been participating in the popular event since its inception as one of the original debutantes.

"It's a fun party. Essentially, it's a costume party," he says. "We're asking everyone if they're man enough to put on a dress and raise funds for a good cause."

And is Holifield ready to be man enough for this year's Cotillion?

"Dahlin'," he says in a thick Southern accent, "you have to be prepared well in advance when you're 6'3" and have to get a custom-made gown."

Atlanta Cotillion VII
'Un Ballo in Maschera'
Sept. 6, 7 p.m.
$75, $150
Schwartz-Goldstein Hall
1605 Peachtree St.
www.atlantacotillion.com

SINCE 2002, ATLANTA COTILLION HAS RAISED approximately $100,000 each year to donate to AID Atlanta for the organization to utilize as it feels fit and where it's needed most. No restrictions or guidelines come with the funds, such as is the case with many grants and federal funding the AIDS service organization receives.

"This is the largest fundraiser for AID Atlanta outside of the AIDS Walk," Holifield says. "The money enables AID Atlanta to help anyone who needs it."

The expense-to-income ration averages about 21 percent of money raised to produce the Cotillion, he adds.

"And most special events come in at 40 to 45 percent, so we're very proud of that," Holifield says.

THIS YEAR'S EVENT IS BEING HELD AT THE Schwartz-Goldstein Hall at The Temple on Peachtree Street, which will be transformed into a scene right out of Venice, Holifield promises.

"We're recreating Venice — the venue is beautiful," he says.

Incorporating masks into this year's event is simply a way to keep the annual party fresh and exciting, he adds.

And the idea of a Cotillion arose from an idea to make a black-tie affair also a bit more fun and interesting.

"How many black-tie affairs do people go to? And they're just regular events, people in penguin suits. This is different. But it's such a misnomer to call it men in dresses," Holifield adds. "That's just 5 percent of it; the other 95 percent is about fundraising."

THE 2008 ATLANTA COTILLION DEBS — and their debutante names — are Justin Ziegler (Scarlett Magnolia Candler), Jeffrey Hopper (Jacqueline-Jayne "Jackie" Daniels), Ronnie Mallette (Dominique Devita Devereaux-O'Hara), Topher Payne (Eudora Maybelline "DoraBelle" Kosciusko) and Erick Mosquera (Audrey Margarita Montenegro).

From top, left to right: **Justin Ziegler**, **Jeffrey Hopper**, **Ronnie Mallette**, **Topher Payne** and **Erick Mosquera**. (Photos by Harold Daniels)

These are men who do not do drag on a regular basis, Holifield stresses, which is a requirement to be recruited to be an Atlanta Cotillion Debutante.

"We get a constant influx of new debs each year and when we select and recruit we look for people who don't do this and are part of different areas of the community," Holifield says. "Therefore, when they reach out to raise money, they reach out to people who haven't been asked before."

From pool parties to plays to bringing in internationally known female impersonators, this year's class of debutantes struck out on their own to find ways to raise money for AID Atlanta, Holifield says.

"The whole concept of this is to create a new way to socialize. This is not a drag pageant," he explains. "This is a way to honor the debs for all the hard work they've done over the past six months. And it's a way to constantly remind people that we are still faced with AIDS in our community."

SOVO FLASHBACK

Civil rights leader, Atlanta mayor 'stand up and represent' with black gays

Some 400 people participating in Atlanta's Black Gay Pride march on Labor Day in 2002 marched alongside civil rights icon U.S. Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.).

Lewis led the "black, out and proud" marchers as they chanted and celebrated their way through the historic West End neighborhood.

"We're here because when we come home and proclaim ourselves black, out and proud, we want to do it where we really live: in historic black neighborhoods," said Anthony Antoine, march founder. "We can only be our true selves among people who look like us."

While Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin was unable to attend the march, she did participate as a candidate in 2001 and made history as the first mayor to address Black Gay Pride when she opened the weekend at the Renaissance Waverly Hotel with an official proclamation from the city.

This year Black Gay Pride will not have a "Stand Up & Represent" march as organizers instead focus on the second annual State of Black Gay America summit.

Southern Voice, Sept. 4, 2002

Marchers gather at a rally after the 'Stand Up & Represent' march at Black Gay Pride. (File photo)

ATL SPORTS CALENDAR

THIS WEEK

FRIDAY, AUG. 29
Atlanta Dream, Women of Inspiration Night, Philips Arena. www.wnba.com/dream
Atlanta Team Tennis Association, Peach International Tennis Championships, Various Locations. www.atta.org/thepeach
Come Out Dancing, Lessons and Social Dance, Several Dancers Core Studio. www.comeoutdancing.com
Friends Friday Bowling League, League Play, Midtown Bowl. www.friendsfriday.org
Hotlanta Volleyball League, Open Play, Various Locations. www.hotlantavolleyball.org

SATURDAY, AUG. 30
Atlanta Team Tennis Association, Peach International Tennis Championships, Various Locations.
Front Runners Atlanta, Weekly Run, Piedmont Park. http://frontrunnersatlanta.org
Hotlanta Soccer Association, Practice, Grady High School. www.hotlantasoccer.com
Wilderness Network of Georgia, Long Creek Falls Bike and Hike and Conasauga River Trail Backpack. www.wildnetga.org

SUNDAY, AUG. 31
Atlanta Team Tennis Association, Peach International Tennis Championships, Various Locations.
Lambda Bowling League, League Play, Midtown Bowl. www.igbo.org/leagues/League_Detail.cfm?LID=85

MONDAY, SEPT. 1
Atlanta Team Tennis Association, Peach International Tennis Championships, Various Locations.
Front Runners Atlanta, Weekly Run, Candler Park.
Southern Line Dancing, Weekly Dancing, Wild Mustang. www.southernline.org

TUESDAY, SEPT. 2
Atlanta Dream, Regular Season Versus Seattle Storm, Philips Arena.
Atlanta Rainbow Trout, Swimming and Water Polo Practice, Various Locations. www.atlantarainbowtrout.com
Atlas Atlanta Bowling League, League Play, Midtown Bowl. igbo.org/leagues/League_Detail.cfm?LID=78
Hotlanta Volleyball League, Open Play, various locations.
Hotlanta Squares, Modern Western Square Dancing Class, First Metropolitan Community Church of Atlanta. www.iagsdc.org/hotlanta

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 3
Front Runners Atlanta, Weekly Run, Piedmont Park.
Hotlanta Soccer Association, Season Play, Silverbacks Park.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 4
Atlanta Rainbow Trout, Swimming Practice, Various Locations.

TO ADD A LISTING... *e-mail calendar@sovo.com or call 404-876-1819 x19.*

Out Olympians add to medal tally

Matthew Mitcham one of several who snagged medals in Beijing

SO VO SOUTHERN VOICE **SPORTS** MATT HENNIE

IT TURNED OUT TO BE ONE OF THE BIGGEST moments of the Beijing Olympics.

Capitalizing on a flubbed last dive by China's Zhou Luxin, 20-year-old Australian diver Matthew Mitcham, who a few days earlier had failed to qualify for the 3-meter diving final, nailed a difficult dive, received the highest score in Olympic history and took home gold in the 10-meter diving competition, surprising a sports world expecting Chinese athletes to dominate.

Oh, yeah. He's gay and won the gold with boyfriend Lachlan Fletcher and mom Vivien seated in the Water Cube.

Mitcham was the only openly gay male competitor in Beijing, one of at least 11 gay, lesbian and bisexual athletes at the Games. His gold was one of seven medals won by gay athletes this year, one more than the 11 gay athletes nabbed in the Athens Games four years ago.

"Mitcham won a high profile event, he won it in prime time and he won it by beating the people who were supposed to be unbeatable," said Jim Buzinski, co-founder of Outsports.com, whose Olympics blog received so much traffic during Mitcham's performance Saturday that it crashed the site's computer servers for two hours. "This is the most significant win ever by an openly gay male athlete."

BUT IT'S NOT THE FIRST. BRITISH FIGURE SKATER John Curry won the men's individual gold in the 1976 Winter Olympics after coming out as gay before the Games opened. There's also New Zealand equestrian competitor Blyth Tait, who took the individual gold in eventing at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

So while Mitcham may get anointed as the newest gay hero, author and sports journalist Patricia Nell Warren argues that his fellow gay competitors also deserve their fair share of attention and accolades. But Warren, who wrote "The Front Runner" in 1974 and six later books, said the other out athletes at the Games are already receiving little media attention in the wake of the Games.

"Some of these attitudes that you see are just really strange and they really break the hearts of athletes who feel that once they are out and competing and doing well that they don't get the recognition the way they should," Warren said. "If we're going to insist that athletes come out, when they do come out they need to be greeted with an attitude of understanding from us. We raked up a pile of medals."

THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF THE MEDAL WINS BY gay athletes in Beijing rests in large part with whether competitors embrace a public role, according to Mike Horton, chair of the Atlanta Gay Sports Alliance.

"The impact is as big as they want to be," Horton said. "I don't know if it is a responsibility, but I would like to see them carry that torch in the LGBT community and inspire younger kids who are athletes and may be reluctant to be either out or a good athlete."

Matthew Mitcham was the highest profile openly gay Olympian, but he was joined by six other gay, lesbian and bisexual athletes who won medals in Beijing. (Photo by AP)

For Sean Fitzgerald, the president of the Atlanta Rainbow Trout, the long-term impact of Mitcham's performance as an out athlete shatters the argument of closeted divers who worry that coming out will cost them points from homophobic judges. In the short term, he hoped the attention on Olympic diving and swimming will boost the membership numbers of the gay swimming and water polo group.

"Once we head back to the pool next week, we are hoping we get a bump out of it," Fitzgerald said.

BEIJING OLYMPICS GAY MEDAL COUNT

GOLD
Gro Hammerseng & Katja Nyberg, Norway, Handball: Team gold.
Natasha Kai, USA, Soccer: Team gold.
Matthew Mitcham, Australia, Diving: 10-meter platform

SILVER
Vicky Galindo & Lauren Lappin, USA, Softball: Team silver.

BRONZE
Linda Bresonik, Germany, Soccer: Team bronze.

DID NOT MEDAL
Judith Arndt, Germany, Cycling: Finished sixth in the women's time trial.
Imke Duplitzer, Germany, Fencing: Lost second round of individual epee.
Rennae Stubbs, Australia, Tennis: Lost in second round of women's doubles with teammate Samantha Samantha Stosur.
Victoria Svensson, Sweden, Soccer: Lost in quarterfinal match to Germany

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Rules Review 8:30-8:45am
Shotgun Start 9:00am
Awards Ceremony 3:30-4pm

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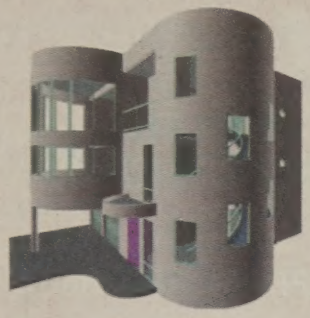

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AUG. 29 - SEPT. 6

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e-mail calendar@sovo.com, call 404-876-1819, ext. 19, or fax to 404-876-2709, attn: Calendar editor. Entries should be submitted at least 14 days in advance of publication date.

FRIDAY AUG. 29

The '80s are alive on the **Regeneration Tour**, a concert featuring Human League, Belinda Carlisle, ABC, Naked Eyes and Flock of Seagulls. www.regenerationtour.com

The smooth sounds of acoustic guitarist **Cell Fehrenbach** set the right tone for your weekend. 9 p.m. at Bellissima Lounge, 560-B Amsterdam Ave. 404-917-0220, myspace.com/bellissima_lounge

FRIDAY AUG. 29 - MONDAY SEPT. 1

Cheer on the gay **Atlanta Team Tennis Association** and guests at the 21st annual **Peach International Tennis Championships**. 'The Peach' features three days of knockouts and Labor Day. www.atta.org, thepeach@atta.org, 770-621-2699

FRIDAY AUG. 29 - SUNDAY AUG. 31

The **Decatur Book Festival** includes some 225 authors, including local gay writers like Fiona Zedde and Mark S. King. Friday, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. - 10 p.m. in multiple venues on and around Decatur Square. www.decaturbookfestival.com

Atlanta's annual **Dragon*Con** convention welcomes 'Star Trek' alum George Takei, as well as other television, film and comics stars. Various hours at four host hotels: Atlanta Hilton, 255 Courtland St.; Hyatt Regency, 265 Peachtree St.; Marriott Marquis, 265 Peachtree Center Ave. Sheraton Atlanta, 165 Courtland St. 770-909-0115, www.dragoncon.org

SATURDAY AUG. 30

The annual **Asian & Friends Pageant** struts through the appreciative Burkhart's crowd. 7 p.m. at Burkhart's, 1492-F Piedmont Ave. 404-872-4403, www.burkharts.com. Pool party: Check in at www.anfatlanta.com

Feel the beat of DJ **Ralphi Rosario** at WETbar and/or DJ **Hector Fonseca** at Heretic, followed by late night rhythm with DJ **Angelo Kortez** in DeKalb County's later bar hours. Rosario: 10 p.m. at WETbar, 960 Spring St., www.wetbaratlanta.com. Fonseca: 9 a.m. at Heretic, 2069 Cheshire Bridge Road, www.hereticatlanta.com. Kortez: 2 a.m. at the Bodyshop, 2675 Johnson Road. 404-636-1233, www.sweetpillow.com, www.bodyshopatlanta.com.

SUNDAY AUG. 31

Move your booty with DJ **Martin Fry**, then find your wee hours groove with DJ **Russ C.** Fry: 6 p.m. – midnight at Opera, 1150 Peachtree St., www.c2productions.biz. Russ C.: 2 a.m. at the Bodyshop, 2675 Johnson Road. 404-636-1233, sweetpillow.com, www.bodyshopatlanta.com.

PHOTO BY AP

FRIDAY AUG. 29 - MONDAY SEPT. 1.
An appearance by **Maurice Jamal** is among the many options to celebrate the continuing events during Atlanta's **Black Gay Pride** weekend. Start your planning process with our complete coverage beginning on Page 27 and our calendar of highlights on Page 33. Also check out these websites for more information:
www.inthelifeatl.org
www.girlsinthenight.com
www.ozonentertainment.com
www.traxxatlanta.com
www.wassupnatl.com
www.xtremeentertainmentevents.com

PHOTO COURTESY PHANTOM DOMESTIC

WEDNESDAY SEPT. 3
Decatur's live music stronghold hosts its **Atlanta Star Songwriter Series** features **Girlyman**, **Garrison Starr** (pictured), Adrianne, and Kyler England. 8 p.m. at Eddie's Attic, 515-B McDonough St., Decatur. 404-377-2976

PHOTO COURTESY BRAVO

FRIDAY SEPT. 5
Another Emmy winning comedian hits Atlanta as **Kathy Griffin** brings her latest act to town for two shows in one night. 7:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. at the Fox Theatre, 660 Peachtree St., 404-817-8700 www.foxtheatre.org

MONDAY SEPT. 1
Just when you think you can dance no more, DJ **Brian Beck** presides over the Heretic's **Labor Day Morning Party**. 6 a.m.-noon at the Heretic, 2069 Cheshire Bridge Road, www.hereticatlanta.com.

TUESDAY SEPT. 2 - **WEDNESDAY** SEPT. 3
Fall TV starts rolling out its first series with three shows sure to draw large gay audiences. **'90210: 2.0,'** (yes, really) **'Top Design,'** and **'America's Next Top Model'** all get started. Tuesday: '90210: 2.0' on the CW (Comcast 13). Wednesday: 'Top Design' on Bravo (Comcast 70).and 'America's Next Top Model' on the CW.

WEDNESDAY SEPT. 3
Author of 'Rockstarlet,' **Stewart Lewis** returns to charm Atlanta with his new novel, **'Relative Stranger.'** 8 p.m. at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse, 991 Piedmont Ave., 404-607-0082, www.outwritebooks.com

THURSDAY SEPT. 4 - **FRIDAY** SEPT. 5
Emmy winning actor and comedian **Leslie Jordan** returns his autobiographical **'My Trip Down the Pink Carpet'** to the Atlanta Stage. 8 p.m. both nights at 14th St. Playhouse, 173 14th St. 404-733-4738, www.14thstplayhouse.org

SATURDAY SEPT. 6
Meet this year's Cotillion debutante class of drag glamour girls in their full glory at **Atlanta Cotillion Ball VII**, and see who gets crowned the queen of fundraising for AID Atlanta. Formal attire. 7 p.m. at Schwartz-Goldstein Hall, 1605 Peachtree St. www.atlantcotillion.com

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					AUG. 29 **Regeneration Tour** at Chastain. ticketmaster.com **DJ Rick Walsh** at the Heretic. www.hereticatlanta.com	**AUG. 30** DJ **Hector Fonseca** at the Heretic. www.hereticatlanta.com DJ **Angelo Kortez** at the Bodyshop. www.bodyshopatlanta.com
AUG. 31 **Lee Hayes** at Outwrite. www.outwritebooks.com	**SEPT. 1** **Labor Day Morning Party** with DJ **Brian Beck** at the Heretic. www.hereticatlanta.com	**SEPT. 2** **Open Mic** at Paris Decatur. www.parisdecatur.com	**SEPT. 3** **'Top Design'** returns to Bravo. www.bravotv.com **Stewart Lewis** at Outwrite. www.outwritebooks.com	**SEPT. 4** **Southern Exposure** at FROGS Cantina. www.myspace.com/southernexposureatlanta	**SEPT. 5** **Latin Night** at the Wild Mustang. www.maxineblue.com	**SEPT. 6** **Atlanta Cotillion Ball**. www.atlantacotillion.com
SEPT. 7 **Amsterdames** at Amsterdam. amsterdam-atlanta.com	**SEPT. 8** **'Jersey Boys'** at the Fox. www.foxtheatre.org	**SEPT. 9** **Family Feud** at Burkhart's. www.burkharts.com	**SEPT. 10** Judy Gold's **'25 Questions for a Jewish Mother'** opens at the Center Theatre. centertheatreatlanta.org	**SEPT. 11** **Ladies' Night** at LeBuzz. www.thenewlebuzz.com	**SEPT. 12** **Halcyon** at Bellissima. www.myspace.com/bellissima_lounge	**SEPT. 13** **Indigo Girls** at Chastain Park. www.ticketmaster.com
SEPT. 14 **Lambda Group** Outside the northern Perimeter, lambdagroup@msn.com	**SEPT. 15** **"Shirts & Skins"** reality series about an all-gay basketball team, premieres on Logo. www.logoonline.com	**SEPT. 16** **Judy Gold** at Outwrite. www.outwritebooks.com **HX Gay & Lesbian Travel Expo,** www.gaytravelexpo.com	**SEPT. 17** **'Beyond Disability: The Fe Fe Stories'** at Charis, www.chariscircle.org **Christopher Beckwith** at Outwrite, www.outwritebooks.com	**SEPT. 18** **Atlantis Events** executive speaks to AEN, www.aen.org **Cliterati Open No-Mic w/Lita Hooper** at Charis, www.chariscircle.org	**SEPT. 19** **'A Jihad for Love'** opens at Midtown Art Cinema, landmarktheatres.com **'Les Miserables'** opens at the Fox Theatre, www.foxtheatre.org	**SEPT. 20** **ENDA Summer Party** w/Stonewall Democrats, www.atlantastonewall.org Women's Outdoor Network **Best Ball Tourney**. www.wonatlanta.com
SEPT. 21 **Alex Lattimore** and **William Green** close out Villa Christina's Summer Jazz Series, www.villachristina.com **Lambda car club cruise,** www.LCC-Dogwood.org	**SEPT. 22** **Atlanta WAND peace demonstration,** www.atlantawand.org	**SEPT. 23** **ALGCC Business builder lunch** at Cowtippers, www.aglccserver.com	**SEPT. 24** Mega Family Project **weekly playgroup**. www.megafamilyproject.org	**SEPT. 25** **Sonya Huber** w/ 'Opa Nobody' at Charis, charisbooksandmore.com **"Ugly Betty," "Grey's Anatomy"** back on ABC, www.abc.com	**SEPT. 26** **"Another Gay Sequel: Gays Gone Wild"** at Midtown Art Cinema, landmarktheatres.com **Mary Delaney** performance @ Bellissima, myspace.com/bellissima_lounge	**SEPT. 27** **CHRISTal Ball** for CHRISkids, www.chriskids.org **Grant Park Tour of Homes,** grantpark.org

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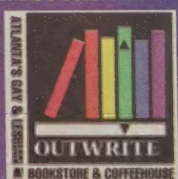

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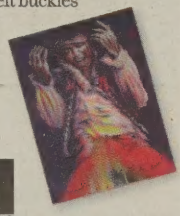

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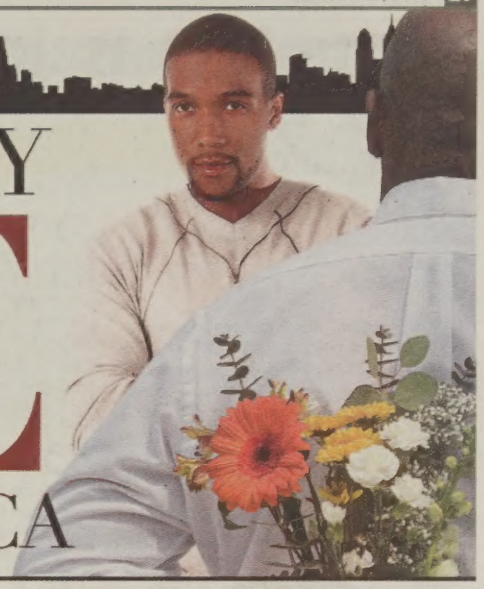

Atlanta's large black gay population provides many dating opportunities, but also presents challenges in establishing committed relationships. (Photos ©iStockphoto.com/Robert Deal (behind), ©iStockphoto.com/DigitalSkillet (front))

By RYAN LEE
rlee@sovo.com

MANY BLACK GAY MEN AND LESBIANS ARE attracted to Atlanta because of the unprecedented opportunities the city offers.

The fusion of black and gay cultures, and the way both are widely dispersed throughout the city, seems to promise a better quality of life than can be found in small towns like Tuskegee, Ala., or even major cities like Boston or San Francisco. Atlanta allows many black gay men and lesbians the opportunity to be out at work and in their neighborhood, while offering abundant social outlets.

But there can be a downside to so much opportunity, as Jarvis Dupree discovered when he and his boyfriend moved to the widely revered ATL a few years ago.

"I moved here with my partner from South Carolina, and Atlanta kind of consumed our relationship because of all of the other opportunities," Dupree said. "Everyone wants to party — they come here thinking it's a big party."

Atlanta's booming black gay population may increase the likelihood of people finding romantic partners, but it also might make settling into a committed relationship more difficult given the added distractions. Despite the city's reputation as a black gay mecca, Chris Sosa, who moved from Philadelphia to attend college in Atlanta, is not hopeful that he will find a lover amongst so many potential partners.

"It's actually made it harder because it's so many boys," Sosa said. "There's so many men here in Atlanta, and it's just so many options. The scene pretty much goes like this: he's fine this week, and then next week you just find somebody else who is finer.

"And if you really can't be happy with one person, there's always going to be someone who's cuter and better looking, and that's the whole thing with dating in Atlanta," he added.

Dupree and his boyfriend broke up about a year after moving to Atlanta, and Dupree has been discouraged by his dating options since then.

"It's very shady," Dupree said. "People aren't interested in dating. They want to casually talk to people, and that's it.

"Outside from being gay, I'm very conservative," he said. "I believe in courting still, and not being in a rush to have sex. It ruins things, but that's what the scene has been reduced to."

'THE HARDEST CHALLENGE'

Darlene Hudson was eager to explore the promises of Atlanta when she first moved here in August 1998.

"I was not looking for a relationship because I had just come here from Arkansas and was trying to take advantage of Hotlanta, the girls," Hudson said. "And some of the people who are my friends who came to Atlanta, they came under the same pretext, or with the same kind of thoughts. I think when people come here — gay and lesbian people, straight people — they are looking for those opportunities to just kind of float around."

But Hudson was also intent on becoming involved in black gay activism in Atlanta; a month after moving here, while attending a meeting for a now-defunct black gay organization, Hudson met a woman named Stefani, who extinguished Hudson's desire to play the field.

As the couple approaches their 10-year anniversary, Hudson advises Atlanta's singles to avoid focusing on finding a relationship as though it were a pot of gold at the end of a black gay rainbow.

"Get busy doing something and stop worrying about a relationship, a relationship will come," said Hudson, who suggested volunteering or becoming involved in a cause. "People should do that, and stop saying, 'OK, I'm going out to Club Miami to find me a woman tonight.' That's what they do, they go find them a woman for that night and it's done."

The sense of liberation Atlanta provides single gay people is also a powerful counterbalance to the difficult work of maintaining a committed relationship, said Hudson's partner, who goes by her first name.

"I think personal relationships are the hardest challenge that human beings have, and there's no formula except trying to be the strongest person you can be, try to lead a contributing life, and along the way you'll attract people who are about the same thing," Stefani said.

Hudson and Stefani attributed their lasting power to honest communication, each partner maintaining her individuality and not rushing into a commitment.

"I don't think people spend enough time being friends first," Hudson said. "They go from, I just met you, to kind of hooking up, and the next thing you know they kind of live together. People don't give each other enough time to be friends and learn people's likes and dislikes."

CULTURAL CONCERNS

Starting and maintaining intimate relationships are generally challenging in any context, but being black and gay has the potential to introduce unique tensions between partners.

As a black lesbian who doesn't see the necessity of having a separate Black Gay Pride, Janine Munoz said she recognized that in some relationships one partner may identify primarily as black, while the other partner identifies as gay first.

"A lot of people in the black community, they see [identifying as gay] as a white man's thing, or something that was imported to Africa," she said. "They think it's not part of the black community, and it can cause differences."

The powerful influence of gender roles in black culture can also interfere with intimate connections, Dupree said.

"White relationships seem to last more and I think it's because they have this equality between them," he said. "Black people are so stuck on roles, and when you make something role-specific, then whatever is missing or whatever role is not being fulfilled, you're going to go out and look to fill it somewhere else."

Black communities and families often get labeled as less accepting of homosexuality, but Rev. Sharon Hodnett and Gail Booker said the support they get from both their families has been essential to them being together for the past 11 years.

"It's a beautiful thing to have, and you need that support," Hodnett said. "Her family loves me and my family loves her, and that's something a lot of couples have a challenge with, and fortunately we don't have that."

Hodnett and Booker believe that knowing yourself before entering a relationship and being open and honest are part of what it takes to succeed. The couple also prays together, and believes that their lesbian relationship has flourished because they've kept God central to their love.

"If you know that your love spans from the fact that God brought this person to you, then you have to work to keep that relationship going," Booker said. "It isn't just you fall in love and that's it. You work at it."

Hodnett added, "Those first three months are always wonderful, it's what you're doing after that that matters."

The same can be said about new arrivals to black gay Atlanta, said Donte Bridges.

"It's a candy shop in terms of dating when you first get here," said Bridges, who is single. "But then the sweetness wears off and when you start looking for something more serious, it's a lot harder."

YOUR GUIDE TO BLACK GAY PRIDE

Black Gay America summit, Page 28
Stars shine at Pride events, Page 30
ITLA hosts films, workshops, Page 32
Black Gay Pride calendar, Page 33

Summit examines 'State of Black Gay America'

Panelists include activists, authors, pastors, entertainers

By RYAN LEE
rlee@sovo.com

With political fever sweeping the country, organizers of Atlanta's Black Gay Pride are hoping to inject some social consciousness into this weekend's line-up of parties.

Xtreme Enetertainment, the promotion group best known for its Lion's Den parties, is partnering with In The Life Atlanta to produce the second annual State of Black Gay America Aug. 30.

"It will celebrate our accomplishments, but at the same time it deals with challenges and issues that impact us," Gregory Allen of Xtreme Entertainment said.

The daytime summit includes panel discussions on topics such as healthcare, religion, economics, relationships and popular culture. Actress and AIDS activist Sheryl Lee Ralph is set to deliver the keynote speech at the summit, which also features a discussion with lesbian activist Mandy Carter, who is part of Democratic Sen. Barack Obama's presidential campaign.

"What we really wanted to impress upon our guests and visitors is with it being a historical election year, we really want people to move from dialogue to action," said Anaré Holmes, board secretary for ITLA, the non-profit that helps organize Black Gay Pride. "Of course, people highlight the party aspect of what goes on here [during Black Gay Pride], but there are a lot of things that are going on dealing with empowerment and community upliftment, and things like that."

Organizers are especially hoping to target young, unregistered voters to attend the summit, which is free to the public. A luncheon before the summit costs $20.

"The entire summit will be driven by politics for the most part — how do we make the best political decisions for the LGBT community," Allen said. "And they will also get good, substantive information that they can take back to their community to empower their community.

"We have to begin to take our place in society and not be afraid to stand up and be who we are, and live truthful lives in our community," he continues. "Part of this weekend is making people more comfortable living their life."

State of Black Gay America summit
Aug. 30, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Luncheon: 11 a.m. – 1 p.m., $20
Summit: 1 p.m. – 4 p.m., free
Renaissance Downtown
590 West Peachtree St.

Actress and AIDS activist **Sheryl Lee Ralph** delivers the keynote speech at the State of Black Gay America summit Aug. 30. (Photo by AP)

Summit panelists:

- **Gwen Thomas,** author
- **Simone Bell,** Lambda Legal representative
- **Earl Fowlkes,** President, International Federation of Black Pride
- **Rev. Kathi Martin,** community "Bridge Builder" and staff pastor for Multicultural Outreach for First Metropolitan Community Church in Atlanta
- **Tracee McDaniels,** transgender activist and founder of the Juxtaposed Center for Transformation
- **Rev. Kenneth Samuel,** Pastor of Victory Church
- **Joseph Merritt,** YouthPride member
- **Jasper Merritt III,** National Black Justice Coalition
- **George Kevin Jordon,** writer
- **Maurice Jamal,** writer, producer, director and actor in films including "Dirty Laundry"
- **Officer Darlene Harris,** LGBT Liaison for the Atlanta Police Department
- **Dr. Paula Frew,** spokesperson for The Hope Clinic of Emory University
- **Anwar Robinson,** actor and finalist during season four of "American Idol" in 2005
- **Marquise Vilson,** transgender activist
- **Rev. Troy Sanders,** founder of web ministry preach2me.com, who will serve as moderator
- Entertainment provided by **Yolo.**

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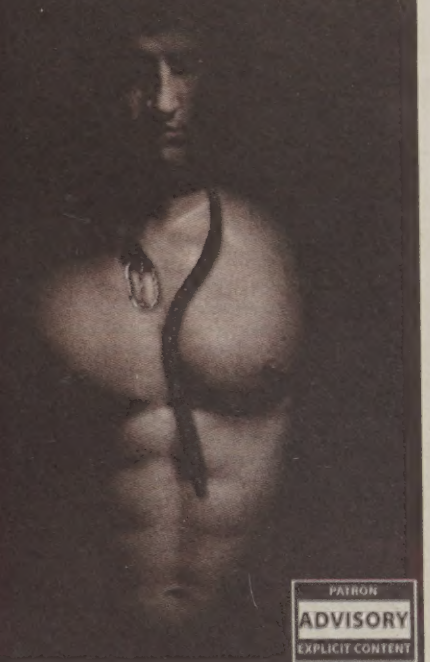

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PATRON ADVISORY EXPLICIT CONTENT

Stars shine at Black Gay Pride

From R&B sensation Danity Kane to porn stud Bobby Blake, annual celebration has something for everyone

By RYAN LEE and DYANA BAGBY

ARE YOU READY, ATLANTA?

Black Gay Pride comes to the city in full force this weekend with dozens of celebrities to wow the estimated 75,000 people expected to pack the clubs for the annual fest, considered the largest event of its kind in the world.

And after you've spent the day with community and cultural events like summits and workshops **(see related stories, pages 28 & 32)**, what better way to heat up Labor Day weekend than with R&B sensation Danity Kane, slated to perform for the women as well as the men?

Wanita Woodgette, better known as D. Wood, is one-fifth of the hot all-girl group sensation Danity Kane.

Wood, who grew up in Atlanta, attended Tri-Cities High School and performed at 7 Stages in Little Five Points while also dancing with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

She still lives in the city, and plans on playing tour guide to her band mates — Aubrey O'Day, Shannon Bex, Dawn Richard and Aundrea Fimbres — by taking them to her favorite spots in Atlanta before the parties begin, including Little Five Points, the Castleberry area and, yes, Lenox Mall.

"I know Lenox Mall will be off the chain this weekend," Wood tells SoVo. "We'll probably get mobbed, but it will be worth it."

The R&B group is currently up for two MTV Video Music Awards and is appearing on the current season of MTV's "Making the Band" reality series created by Sean Combs.

The band formed in 2005 during the third season of "Making the Band" and released its self-titled debut album in 2006. It included two hit singles, "Show Stopper" and "Ride for You."

Their second album, "Welcome to the Dollhouse," came out in March 2008 with the top 10 single "Damaged."

Wood, who lives in the Austell area, attended her first Black Gay Pride last year and had so much fun she wanted to come back.

"I performed last year at Fever and we did a cat walk at Traxx. But [actress] Eva Pigford showed us up!" she says, laughing.

Pride parties bring out Danity Kane's most devoted fans, Wood adds, giving special props to the men who go all out with their impersonations of the female band members.

And while she has gay and lesbian friends, Wood says she is probably more "boy crazy" now than when she was a kid. However, she's married to her career, she says.

And, she adds, she's depending on gay Atlanta to show Danity Kane how this city parties. The group performs Aug. 30 at Traxx Atlanta for the men and also the same night at the Georgia Freight Depot for the women.

"As an entertainer, you are being entertained by the crowd. Gay Pride brings out our most die-hard fans," she says. "The more and more we go out, we just found out [gays] are the livest crowd. So don't hold back, Atlanta!"

THE LARGEST CROWD ON SUNDAY NIGHT will likely gather at Club Europe in Doraville, where R&B singers Truth Hurts and Anwar Robinson headline a party that attracts around 5,000 people. Robinson, who was a finalist during season four of "American Idol" in 2005, is also scheduled to speak at the second annual State of Black Gay America summit Aug. 30.

Robinson's sexual orientation first became the subject of chatter when fans discovered an online profile of Robinson that indicated he was gay. Robinson was openly gay since high school, friends said, although some critics believe that the reality TV show "re-closeted" Robinson by encouraging him to downplay being gay.

Robinson recently played the role of the gay, HIV-positive character Tom Collins in a touring version of "RENT," but has remained publicly coy about his sexual orientation. Robinson could not be reached for comment by press time and does not appear to have spoken to other press outlets about being gay, making the State of Black Gay America summit one of his first public appearances as a gay singer.

Also making an appearance this year is Bre Scullark, 23, of New York, who made it to the final three in Season 5 of "America's Next Top Model" before being eliminated in the season finale. And while she may have some regrets about some of her antics during the 2005 season (remember charges of stolen granola bars?), the model and actress says she learned a lot from the experience.

"It helped me a lot. I'm not going to blame it on editing. I was pretty crazy on the show, but I had to own up to it," she tells Southern Voice.

The exposure from the reality TV show helped her land spreads in Vibe Magazine and Essence Magazine as well as in commercials for Old Navy and Target.

Bre, as she is known, comes to Atlanta for her first Black Gay Pride, but is in the city once or twice a month working with the non-profit organization, Drop Dead Gorgeous, which brings attention to human sex trafficking.

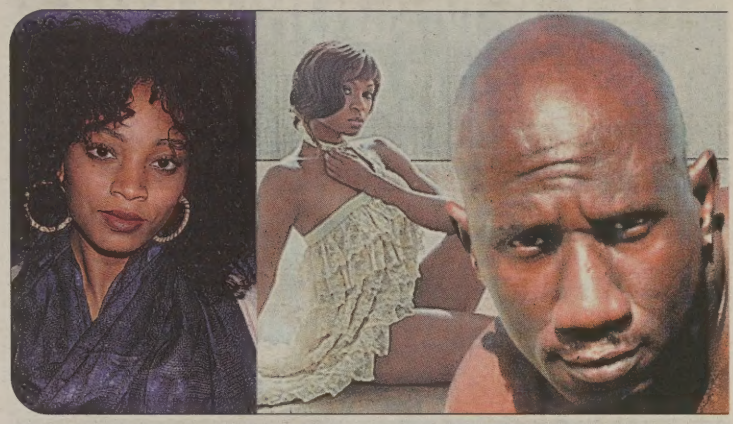
"Trafficking is very bad in Atlanta," she says. "Many girls get trapped through fashion. They're promised they will be models and taken somewhere and told they can't tell their parents and they end up as sex slaves. This group is about bringing awareness."

But over Labor Day weekend, Bre, says she will focus on having fun and meeting fans at several walk-throughs at various parties and expects the experience to be "intense."

"There's something about Gay Pride and my culture — we can really bring it," she says.

While a couple of her female cast mates on "America's Next Top Model" made out with each other, Bre says she's never kissed a girl.

"I do like my guys," she says with a laugh. "But at the same time, to each his own. And I plan to be at each and every Black Gay Pride event I can."



Bre, D. Woods & Danity Kane, and **Bobby Blake** are just a few of the celebrities flocking to Atlanta for Black Gay Pride. (Bre photo by AP, Woods photo courtesy danitykane.com, Blake photo courtesy Running Press)

MEN WHO HAVE ADMIRED BOBBY BLAKE IN many of his adult films will have several chances to catch him over Pride weekend.

On many levels, it makes perfect sense for Blake's autobiography to be entitled, "My Life in Porn."

Seriously, what other title is more appropriate or descriptive for someone who most fans know exclusively as one of the roughest, most aggressive gay porn stars of the past decade?

Blake originally thought of calling his memoir "Prodigal Son" as a nod to his religiosity, which includes being raised in a devout Methodist household and becoming an associate minister at a Baptist church in Memphis. But someone along the way, probably the marketing gurus at Running Press, thought that a religious title might be a bit out-of-context and it's best to keep things simple: "My Life in Porn: The Bobby Blake Story."

The oversimplified book title, along with the equally unsubtle cover image, hides the depth of Blake's career and life story, where he goes from being a sickly, abandoned foster child to one of the most successful and recognized gay porn stars in America. Blake reads from and signs copies of "My Life in Porn" at Outwrite bookstore on Aug. 30 as part of Atlanta's Black Gay Pride weekend.

"It was an intense, amazing, and often highly enjoyable period of my life, and I am not ashamed of it," Blake writes about his porn career. "Now, looking back on it, I do regret it.

"Now that it's over, I can accept that that journey was all part of God's plan for me," adds Blake, who believes his close relationship with God and the church partly inspired him to seek the affirmation that accompanies being an adult film star.

"It was that condemnatory mentality that sent me out into the world of adult porn to do the things I've done," he writes. "I was made to feel an outcast, and I did things that, had I been accepted as who I truly was by the church, had I not felt rejected on account of my sexuality, I would have never done. It's for that reason I say that, though I'm not ashamed of what I've done, I do regret it."

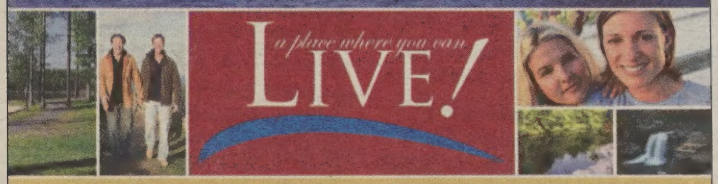
The book offers a fascinating overview of how, in a relatively short period of time, Bobby Blake became one of the biggest names in gay porn, legendary for the way he humiliated the guys with whom he was having sex. Co-written by John Gordon, it also explores Blake's rivalries with other "power tops" like Tiger Tyson, Bam, and Blake's former lover, Flex Deon.

Blake's behind-the-scenes descriptions of some of black gay porn's most notable figures — particularly his "showbiz marriage" to Flex Deon — are the juiciest parts of the memoir, and alone are worth the purchase price. Blake, who also headlines an all-male revue at the Lion's Den party at Club Europe Aug. 31, includes Atlanta references throughout his memoir but rarely features the city in a positive light.

Blake complains about the judgment he endured in the church and congratulates himself on his "live and let live" philosophy, but displays an astounding amount contempt for our "whorish" city, both in his book and in an interview with Southern Voice this week.

"Times have changed and I see a younger generation, and some things I rejoice while other things bring tears to my eyes," Blakes says of visiting Atlanta. "I see young gay black men who aren't educated and are disrespectful to themselves and others. They don't care about how they present themselves in the public.

"Us gay black men who are 40 or 35 and up come from a different upbringing, one who believes that you carry yourself in a respectful way," he adds. "In doing so, you don't have to ask people to respect you. Going to Lenox Mall, what I've seen is disbelief because we have to understand that that is a public facility, and there are children with their families, and babies, and we have to be careful how we present ourselves. And we get upset when the media presents us in a negative way."



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Community, culture events pack Pride days

In the Life Atlanta offers broad range of programming

By MASHAUN D. SIMON

Kevin Fenton, head of the CDC division that includes HIV, will participate in an ITLA workshop on how the disease impacts the black gay community. (Photo courtesy CDC)

IN THE LIFE ATLANTA, THE NON-PROFIT GROUP that serves as official organizer of Black Gay Pride, offers a full slate of cultural and community events throughout Labor Day Weekend.

The "See Us In The Life" film festival is one of the most popular events during the weekend of festivities, said Anare Holmes, ITLA board secretary and film festival organizer.

Labeled as "Atlanta's premier festival for filmmakers, animators and artists whose work explores topics relevant to black lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities," the festival will begin on Saturday afternoon at 4 p.m. and will run through Sunday afternoon. The films will be shown at the W Hotel-Midtown, which is ITLA's host hotel and home to most ITLA events.

This year's festival has some exciting additions including "How We Got Over," an animated films set on the fictional Wesley Grove Plantation.

"Think 'South Park' meets 'Roots,'" said Holmes. "I do not expect them to receive an NAACP Image award, but it is a hilarious film."

The film is about a group of slaves whose owner dies, yet they choose to stay and pretend as though nothing has changed.

In addition to "How We Got Over," Holmes is also excited to have Maurice Jamal's "Friends & Lovers," a sequel to "Ski Trip." There will also be more films targeting women during this year's festival.

"In the past the films were extremely male heavy," said Holmes. "So this year, we wanted to be more inclusive."

Holmes also reports that there will be efforts to have the film festival reach beyond just Labor Day weekend. They are looking at doing more year round planning.

DIVERSE WORKSHOPS This year's Black Gay Pride attendees can choose from a total of 32 workshops to add an educational and empowering component to a weekend that also includes plenty of parties.

According to D'Lovely Gibson, ITLA vice president and workshop organizer, they wanted to provide attendees with a broad range of choices.

Workshops are chosen from a list of proposals submitted by individuals within the community. This year's workshop schedule features topics including family planning, sexuality, politics, spirituality and financial empowerment.

"We try to have panels that are relevant to the times," she said.

A few panel highlights include a discussion with Dr. Kevin Fenton, director of the CDC's National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD & TB Prevention, on HIV/AIDS and its affect on the black gay community; and Warriorz & SuperSheros/Heros/Teros, a discussion on the importance of allies in the LGBT community.

"Our workshops are a little less panel and a little more workshop," said Gibson. "It is one of the things we tell our presenters, that they allow for an open dialogue and make the discussions more intimate."

The full workshop schedule is available on ITLA's website.

TO YOUR HEALTH More than $500 worth of health screenings and other healthcare services will be made available to attendees of this year's Black Gay Pride celebration thanks to the ITLA "Living in Our Pride" health expo.

Held annually, the expo will take place throughout the entire weekend and will be housed in the Black Gay Pride marketplace.

"The health expo has become a signature event," said Raymond Duke, expo organizer and an ITLA board member. "It is not just a health fair, it is a health expo."

Attendees will have access to head-to-toe services: from hair care to vision screenings to foot and body massages; as well as cholesterol, colon and prostate screenings, and a host of holistic care services. According to Duke there will be representatives from Sevananda, the natural foods store in Little Five Points, as well as Crystal Springs.

Duke wants to encourage attendees to not just attend the marketplace to shop, but to also take advantage of these services.

"Yes, we want people to come and have a good time. But at the same time, we want people to take advantage of he things we are doing aside from just the social things," he said. "At the end of the day, you still have to be healthy to enjoy yourself."

Other ITLA offerings include literary readings, plays and a fashion show.

In the Life Atlanta Events
W Hotel Atlanta Midtown
188 14TH St NE
www.inthelifeatl.com

BLACK GAY PRIDE EVENTS

FRIDAY AUG. 29

In the Life Atlanta Opening ceremony
8-10 p.m. at W Midtown
188 14th St.

Traxx & Lion's Den welcome party ft. Trina
7 p.m.-4 a.m. at Renaissance Downtown
590 West Peachtree St.

Fire & Desire mini ball
7 p.m.-until at Renaissance Downtown

E. Patrick Johnson book signing
8 p.m. at Outwrite
991 Piedmont Ave.

The All-Black Affair
10 p.m.-3 a.m. at Park Tavern
500 10th St.

Glamour and Glitz III
10 p.m. at Thrive!
101 Marietta St.

Trade Friday
10 p.m-3 a.m. at Trademark
91 Broad St.

Frisky Friday ft. Trina
10 p.m.-5 a.m. at Club Miami
3011 Buford Hwy.

New York Invasion
10 p.m.-3 a.m. at Django
495 Peachtree St.

Grown Folks Takeover Pt. I ft. KeKe Wyatt
10 p.m.-4 a.m. at Endenu/Attraxxions
393 Marietta St.

ITLA Speakfire!
11:55 p.m.-2 a.m. at W Midtown

SATURDAY AUG. 30

ITLA Literary café
10 a.m.-noon at W Midtown

ITLA Living In Our Pride health expo
10 a.m.-6 p.m. at W Midtown

ITLA workshops
Noon-5:45 p.m. at W Midtown

State of Black Gay America summit
11 a.m.-4 p.m. at Renaissance Downtown

Traxx Girls' women's basketball tournament
Noon-until at Chastain Memorial Park Gymnasium
135 W. Wieuca Road

Laurinda Brown book signing
2 p.m. at Outwrite

MyATLProductions pool party
2-6 p.m. at Marriott Hotel
2000 Century Blvd.

She-Tea hot body competition
3-8 p.m. at Westin Peachtree
210 Peachtree St.

Atlanta Wet block party ft. Chilli
3-8:30 p.m. at WETbar
960 Spring St.

ITLA See Us In The Life film fest
4-8 p.m. at W Midtown

'All in the Name of Love' play
7 p.m. at 14th St. Playhouse
173 14th St.

Bobby Blake book signing
8 p.m. at Outwrite

E. Patrick Johnson, Chili and Tweet are among those slated for appearances during Black Gay Pride weekend.

YouthPride Back-to-School dance
8-11:59 p.m. at W Midtown

'Walk Like A Man' play
8-10:30 p.m. at Richard H. Rich Theatre
Woodruff Arts Center, 1280 Peachtree Street
$30 in advance, $35 day of event, 404-733-5000

Traxx pride party ft. Danity Kane
10 p.m.-6 a.m. at Traxx Atlanta
1287 Columbia Dr., Decatur

Big Bang party ft. Danity Kane
10 p.m.-4 a.m. at Georgia Freight Depot
1 Martin Luther King Dr.

Grown Folks Takeover Pt. II ft. Tweet
10 p.m.-3 a.m. at The Loft
1374 West Peachtree

The Candy Shop
10 p.m.-3 a.m. at The Mark
79 Poplar St NW

Magnum Saturday ft. Monica
10 p.m.-3 a.m. at Club 708
708 Spring St.

SUNDAY AUG. 31

ITLA workshops
Noon-5:45 p.m. at W Midtown

Brown Sugar Vibe brunch
11 a.m. at Sugarhill in Underground Atlanta
50 Upper Alabama Road

ITLA Jazz Brunch
Noon-2 p.m. at W Midtown

Ladies of Entertainment & Hip Hop awards
2-6 p.m. at Pure Atlanta
2793 Clairmont Road

101 Degrees pool party ft. Alex "Militia" Castro
3-11 p.m at Secret Mansion Location
Meeting Location: Perimeter Mall, Macy's parking lot
4400 Ashford Dunwoody Road
Shuttle Time: 2:45-11:30 p.m.

Unity Ball
4 p.m.-until at Renaissance Downtown

ITLA See Us In The Life film fest ft. Maurice Jamal
3-8 p.m. at W Midtown

Comedy Explosion
6 p.m. at Uptown Comedy Club
800 Marietta St.

Doria Roberts at MixHer
7 p.m. & 9 p.m. at Vino Libro
933 Garrett St.
www.myspace.com/mixheratvinolibro

KeKe Wyatt @ django
7 p.m.-3 a.m. at django

Rodney Lofton & Lee Hayes book signing
8 p.m. at Outwrite

ITLA Living In Your Pride fashion show
8-10 p.m. at W Midtown

Ladies at Play Black Gay Pride Dance
8 p.m. – 2:30 a.m. at Cascade Club
2890 Continental Colony Pkwy

Lion's Den ft. Anwar Robinson & Truth Hurts
10 p.m.-5 a.m. at Club Europe
4001 Presidential Parkway, Doraville

The All-Black Affair
10 p.m.-3 a.m. at Park Tavern

'My Girl Gotta Girlfriend' variety show ft. Miss Sophia
10 p.m.-5 a.m. at Club Miami

American Gladiator Alex 'Militia' Castro
10 p.m.-4 a.m. at Final Chapter
2241 Faulkner Road

MONDAY SEPT. 1

Noah's Arc reunion and marathon
3 p.m. at Renaissance Downtown

All White Party
10 p.m.-3 a.m. at WETbar

Secret Monday
10 p.m.-3 a.m. at The Side Bar
79 Poplar St. NW

Women's events italicized.

For details and even more events, visit:
www.inthelifeatl.com
www.girlsinthenight.com
www.ladiesatplay.com
www.ozonentertainment.com
www.sistahsforsistahs.com
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Johnson courtesy the author, Chili and Tweet by AP, Roberts photo courtesy the artist

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PURE HEAT & THE EVOLUTION

ATLANTA PRIDE WEEKEND 2008

AUGUST 28 - SEPTEMBER 2

FEMALE EVENTS

Thursday August 28, 2008
- **Pure Heat & Evolution Happy Hour Meet & Greet** 6-11PM @ Renaissance Hotel
- **Xplosion Thursday/Pride Weekend Kick Off** @ BLUEROOM 10-3am

Friday August 29, 2008
- **Host Hotel Welcome To Atlanta Reception** 7-9PM @ Renaissance Hotel Ballroom
- **Frisky Friday** @CLUB MIAMI | TRINA Live In Concert-10PM-5AM
- **Pretty In PINK**, Grown Folks Take Over Part I

KEKE WYATT Live In Concert Endenu/Attraxions |10:00pm-4:00am

Saturday August 30, 2008
- **Atlanta WeTI BLOCK PARTY**

Hosted By CHILLI FROM TLC & THE GLENN TWINS @ WET BAR | 3PM-8:30PM
- **Traxx Girls MBanks/RRivers Annual Pride BasketBall Tournament**

Children & Families Welcome | Food/DJ/Prizes/BBQ | Chastain Memorial Park Gymnasium | 1PM-7PM
- **The Legendary Traxx Girls "Big Bang Event"** @ FREIGHT DEPOT

(1 MLK Dr. Atlanta Ga. /Outside the Johnny Rockets UnderGround Atlanta)
Biggest Girl Party In The Country 4000 Women
Live Performance By DANITY KANE | ASK ABOUT IT! | 10PM-5:30AM
- **Solar Wind Grown Folks Take Over Part II** | Live Performance By TWEET | @ THE LOFT | 10PM-3AM |

Sunday August 31, 2008
- **Sunday Morning Worship Service** @ Vision Church-1240 Euclid Ave 9am-11am
- **"Soulfood Sunday Brunch"** Hosted by

Internationally Known Spoken Soul Artist Queen Sheba & Bella Cartel:
Performances by KEN J MARTIN: Poetry Slam $300 cash prize! |
@ RENAISSANCE HOTEL- Atlanta Ballroom | 12PM-3PM
- **Atlanta Pride Wknd Unity Ball** | @ RENAISSANCE HOTEL-Georgia Ballroom | 4PM-8PM
- **Comedy Explosion** | UPTOWN COMEDY CLUB | Doors Open @5:30 | 6PM-8:30PM
- **My Girl Gotta Girlfriend Sunday** | Hosted By V-103 Ms Sophia

Special guest Sapharyi from Charm School & Flavor Of Love
SHOWTIME 11-12 | @ CLUB MIAMI | 10PM-5AM

Monday September 1, 2008
- **Some Like it Hot: Annual Traxx Girls Pool Party** BBQ/Free Drinks/

Everyone Invited / This Pool Party Will Be CRAZY! |
- **ANESA Bday Bash Celebration** @ RENAISSANCE HOTEL ROOF TOP | 4PM-9PM
- **The All White Party** @ The Wet Bar| 10PM-3AM
- **DJ M Birthday Bash Strip Club Event** | Amateur Night | @ The Body Tap | 10pm-1:30am

MALE EVENTS

Thursday, August 28, 2008
- Evolution and Pure Heat Happy Hour Meet & Greet @ The Renaissance Hotel 6-11pm
- The Lion's Den Presents "Vegas" N "Atl" Featuring Casino Royale & Monte St. Jame's All Star Cast of All's Purple Dragon @ The Renaissance Hotel 10:00 p.m. – 3:00 a.m.

Friday, August 29, 2008
- The Lion's Den & Traxx Atlanta Present

"The Evolution and Pure Heat Official Welcome to Atlanta Kickoff Party & Reception"
Reception: 7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. (Free Admission)
After Party: 10:00 p.m. – 4:00 a.m. (General Admission)
Live Performance by "The Diamond Princess TRINA" @ The Renaissance Hotel

Saturday, August 30, 2008
- Xtreme Entertainment, Inc. (XEI) in association with In The Life Atlanta (ITLA) Presents

"The 2nd Annual State of Black Gay America (SBGA) Summit"
with Keynote Speaker Sheryl Lee Ralph @ The Renaissance Hotel 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
The Lion's Den Presents "The Evolution 2008"
- 5th Annual Wet Dream Pool Party" @ The Renaissance Hotel RoofTop

4:00 p.m. – 12 Midnight
- Legendary Traxx Atlanta Presents THE BIG BLAZE over 6000 Men w/Danity Kane Performing Live @ Traxx Atlanta 10pm-6am

Sunday, August 31, 2008
- Legendary Traxx Atlanta Presents 101 Degrees Mansion Pool Party (Rain or Shine)

@ The Mansion (Secret Location) $10,000,000 Mansion-Shuttle Will Run Every 30 Mins From Behind Macy's At Perimeter Mall 4pm -Midnite
- The Lion's Den Presents "The Evolution 2008 Main Event" featuring "The Xtreme Catwalk Fashion Show & Competition" and "The Xtreme Tease All Male Review"

@Club Europe 4001 Presidential Parkway, Atlanta, GA 30340 9:00 p.m. – 6:00 a.m.
Fashion Show: 12:00 Midnight
Male Review: 2:00 a.m.

Monday, September 1, 2008
- The Lion's Den, Traxx Atlanta & Traxx Girls Presents

"The Evolution & Pure Heat White Party @ The WETbar 9:00 p.m. – 3:00 a.m.

david

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making a POINT

What shaped gay 'Star Trek' alum and Dragon*Con guest GEORGE TAKEI

(Photo courtesy of Brad Altman)

By MATT SCHAFER
mschafer@sovo.com

SOME OF GEORGE TAKEI'S FIRST MEMORIES are of being told he and his family were different, and potentially dangerous.

"I still remember that scary day when two American soldiers with bayoneted rifles stomped up to our Los Angeles home and ordered us out," Takei says.

A second generation Japanese-American, then 5-year-old Takei and his family were taken to an internment camp in Arkansas, then later to northern California. The Takeis were among the more than 100,000 Japanese Americans confined for the duration of World War II due to fears of disloyalty from anyone with one-eighth Japanese ancestry or more who lived on the West Coast.

"My mother was born in Sacramento; my father was a San Franciscan; I was born in Los Angeles," Takei says. "But that didn't matter. There were no charges, there were no trials."

Both Takei's parents spoke Japanese, and because of their answers on a "loyalty questionnaire," were held at the most secure camp in the internment system.

Takei says he adjusted to conditions inside the camp with a child's adaptability, but certain ironies did not escape his attention.

"I went to school in a black, tar-paper barrack, and we began the school day every day with the Pledge of Allegiance," he says. "I could see the barbed wire fences, and I could see the guard towers as I recited the words 'with liberty and justice for all.'"

TWENTY YEARS LATER, TAKEI became part of a fictional embodiment of the words he once said daily behind

Please see **TAKEI** on **Page 42**

Dragon*Con
Aug. 29 – Sept. 1
Hyatt Regency Atlanta
www.dragoncon.org

SO SOUTHERN VOICE VO scene

Leslie Jordan, Page 36 • 'Underworld,' Page 38 • Labor Day weekend DJs, Page 40

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Leslie Jordan's 'Pink Carpet' rolls out again

SOVO SOUTHERN VOICE SCENE IN BRIEF

Leslie Jordan returns in 'Pink Carpet.' (File photo)

He's short, he's hysterical, he's here to tell it like it is, and Atlanta loves him for it.

"I'm the gayest man I know," repeats Leslie Jordan by way of introduction to the second of his one-man autobiographical shows. "My Trip Down the Pink Carpet" returns to Atlanta Sept. 4-5 at 14th Street Playhouse.

Jordan won an Emmy as the caustic closet case Beverly Leslie on "Will & Grace" and became a cult icon through his role as Brother Boy in "Sordid Lives." He grew closer to his Atlanta fans over the last few years as a part-time resident of sorts.

First, he set up camp in town with his high-camp performances of "Like A Dog on Linoleum," which was his first pass at coming clean — hilariously — about his life as a sexaholic and substance abuser. Gay Atlanta got to know him intimately not only through the show, but also as a regular at Ansley Mall, Swinging Richards and in guest appearances at local bars.

Locals may love his stories of growing up in the South even more than the audiences who gave him standing ovations across the country, Jordan says.

"Atlanta is near and dear to me," Jordan says. "I left home and came out in Atlanta in the '70s, so I know it well, and the city and I have sort of grown up together. There's a 'Southernness' that makes us all feel comfortable."

Last year, Jordan compiled more stories from his childhood, his encounters in Hollywood, and his struggles to overcome his addictions. That became "My Trip Down the Pink Carpet," which is expected to sell out again this round.

'My Trip Down the Pink Carpet'
Sept. 4-5, 8 p.m.
14th Street Playhouse
173 14th St.
404-733-4738
www.14thstplayhouse.org
www.thelesliejordan.com

Athens Boys Choir celebrates latest CD at Decatur performance

Harvey Katz (Photo courtesy Harvey Katz)

Harvey Katz, now the lone member of the spoken-word act Athens Boys Choir, is not known for subtlety.

"I just call it like I see it," Katz says. "And you can't help but have a sense of humor about the whole ordeal when you're a Jewish transsexual man from the Deep South."

True to form, Katz releases his new disc entitled "Bar Mitzvah Superhits of the '80s, '90s and Today" on Sept. 2 and celebrates with a performance at Eddie's Attic in Decatur on Sept. 4. Local gay musician Wayne Fishell joins the show, as well as a "surprise guest."

Katz isn't saying who it might be, only that the performer's "status as Mayor of Awesomeville remains true."

Athens Boys Choir began as a duo out of Athens, Ga. They quickly became a sensation in the queer homo-hop movement in Atlanta and beyond. Katz then became Harvey Katz and went solo, but kept the Athens Boys Choir name.

Athens Boys Choir/Harvey Katz
Sept. 4, 8 p.m.
Eddie's Attic
515-B North McDonough St, Decatur
404-377-4976
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Stewart Lewis brings newest novel 'Relative Stranger' to Atlanta

Some know him as a singer-songwriter who has opened for the likes of Sheryl Crow, Shawn Colvin and Ani DiFranco. His songs have been featured on television from "Dawson's Creek" and "Party of Five" to "The Biggest Loser" and "Ghost Whisperer." He was recently signed to here!Tunes.

Stewart Lewis
Sept. 3, 7:30 p.m.
Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse
991 Piedmont Ave.
404-607-0082
www.outwritebooks.com

But music isn't what brings Stewart Lewis to Atlanta this week. Lewis took a successful detour in 2006 from music into literature with his first novel "Rockstarlet," and he presents his new dishy gay novel "Relative Stranger" at Outwrite on Sept. 3.

In the new book, a promiscuous Broadway producer with a big secret has a chance encounter with a 16-year-old girl with great promise, a joy for life and strong spirit, despite a chaotic life. Fate helps them change each other's lives, then the offbeat friendship falls under a compelling challenge when secrets begin to surface.

— Mike Fleming

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The deadline for inclusion in the Sept. 5th issue is Tues., Sept. 2nd.

Entries are limited to no more than 100 words and can be accompanied by a picture. A phone number and e-mail address are required for verification, but will not be published.

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Something for everyone

Labor Day weekend offers smorgasbord of gay events

SO VO SOUTHERN VOICE **NIGHTLIFE**
MATT SCHAFER

GAY ATLANTA SAYS GOODBYE TO SUMMER with style as promoters plan a bevy of events to cater to nearly every desire.

In addition to the bevy of Black Gay Pride events, other partygoers looking to maximize their three-day Labor Day weekend can take advantage of several special events in and around Atlanta.

For those who prefer celebrations danced to the beat of a renowned DJ, the party starts in earnest on Saturday, Aug. 30, with visiting DJ Hector Fonseca at the Heretic, as well as DJ Ralphi Rosario at WETbar. At 2 a.m. the same night, DJ Angelo Kortez keeps the beat well toward sun-up at the Bodyshop.

Sunday, the DJs don't let up. A T-Dance with DJ Martin Fry at Opera starts at 6 p.m. Sunday night, then DJ Russ C. at the Bodyshop follows from midnight to 6 a.m. Sunday climaxes well into Monday with DJ Brian Beck at the Heretic from 6 a.m. to noon.

"Yeah, you can almost party all day long, so that's pretty special," says Allan Collins, the key party planner at Heretic and the Bodyshop.

Hector Fonseca is among the big-name visiting DJs over Labor Day weekend. (Photo courtesy Project Publicity)

ALMOST EVERY GAY PROMOTER WANTS TO take advantage of the Monday off to push the weekend as long as it can last. Chris Coleman of C2 Productions leads the party at Opera's Venetian Club with Sunday's evening T-Dance.

"It comes from the English concept of high tea, sort of early evening event. We shortened it to T-Dance," Coleman says, noting the kick off party offers partygoers a different feeling.

"There definitely is a different vibe, the T-Dances that start at six are definitely more of a social event," he says. "Guys come out and have a cocktail with their friends and then once the sun sets, it becomes more of a dance event."

NOT TO BE OUT- done, Atlanta's women throw down their own schedule of near-nonstop parties. Girls in the Night presents a series of day and night events that began Thursday and last through Sunday. The series, collectively known as Femme-nomen-non, features 13 events from downright parties and meet and greets to literary events.

Actress **Sarah Shahi**, who played Carmen on 'The L World,' joins Girls in the Night and Girlology 101 for a meet-and-greet and party on Saturday night. (Photo by Peter Kramer/AP)

"It's overall just a big wonderful party, it's no holds barred, you have your dancers, your non-dancers, everyone just dresses up and has a great time," says Kisma Stephenson, Girls in the Night organizer.

Femme-nomen-non features a series of linked parties at "secret" locations. Partygoers often have to attend an earlier party to find the location of a later one.

"That just puts an air of suspense to it; it just builds the anticipation," Stephenson says. "You have no idea what you're getting next."

IF YOU'D RATHER NOT SPEND ALL WEEKEND on the dance floor, the holiday weekend offers plenty of gay and gay-inclusive events not accompanied by thudding techno beats.

Some 225 authors (including several well-known lesbian and gay writers) will appear at Decatur Book Festival, thousands are expected at the Dragon Con sci-fi and fantasy convention **(see story, Page 35)**, and the gay Atlanta Team Tennis Association hosts its annual Peach International Tennis Championships. Also on tap are special Labor Day events at more than a few gay watering holes.

Femme-nomen-non
Daytime and nighttime events
through Aug. 31
www.myspace.com/girlsinthenight

'The Peach' International
Tennis Championships
Aug. 29-Sept. 1
770-621-2699
www.atta.org

Decatur Book Festival
Aug. 29-Aug. 31
Decatur Square
www.decaturbookfestival.com

End of Summer party
Best Butts Contest
Aug. 29, 9 p.m.
Mary's ; 1287 Glenwood Ave.
404-624-4411
www.marysatlanta.com

DJ Hector Fonseca
w/DJ Brian Beck opening
Aug. 30, 9 p.m.
The Heretic
2069 Cheshire Bridge Road
www.hereticatlanta.com

Labor Day Cookout
Aug. 30, Noon to 6 p.m.
LeBuzz
585 Franklin Road, Marietta
660-424-1337

Sarah Shahi
Meet-and-greet 4 p.m. -10 p.m.
Bellissima Lounge
560 Amsterdam Ave.
Party, 10 p.m. – 3 a.m.
595 North
www.girlology101.com

DJ Ralphi Rosario
Aug. 30, 10 p.m.
WETbar
960 Spring St.
www.wetbaratlanta.com

DJ Angelo Kortez
Aug. 30 (Aug. 31), 2 a.m.
The Bodyshop
2675 Johnson Road
404-636-1233
www.sweetpillow.com
www.bodyshopatlanta.com

Asians & Friends Pageant
Aug. 30, 7 p.m.
Burkhart's
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www.burkharts.com.

DJ Martin Fry
Aug. 31, 6 p.m.-midnight
Venetian Room at Opera
1150 Peachtree St.
www.c2productions.biz

'Bliss' w/DJ Russ C.
Aug. 31 (Sept. 1), 11 p.m.-6 a.m.
The Bodyshop
www.sweetpillow.com
www.bodyshopatlanta.com

Labor Day Morning Party
w/DJ Brian Beck
Sept. 1, 6 a.m.-Noon
The Heretic
www.hereticatlanta.com

Chuckwagon Barbeque
Sept. 1, Noon to 6 p.m.
Blake's on the Park, 227 10th St.
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AUGUST 31
Marshall Chapman
rock

Girlyman

SEPTEMBER 3
Girlyman, Garrison Starr, Adrianne
folk pop

Athens Boys Choir

SEPTEMBER 4
Athens Boys Choir
spoken word

SEPTEMBER 4
Caroline Aiken & Trina & Tomi, *folk rock*

SEPTEMBER 10
Doria Roberts & Barb Carbon, *folk*

SEPTEMBER 13
Basia Bulat, *folk*

Michelle Malone

SEPTEMBER 27
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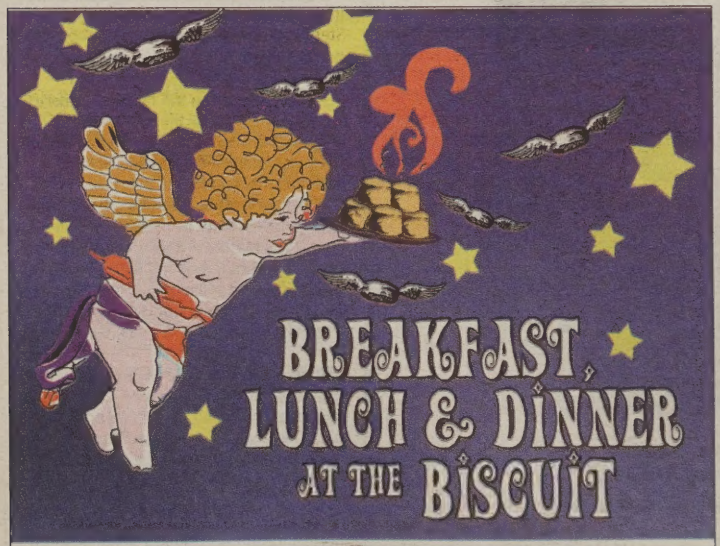

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Marriage only the latest in long history of activism for Takei

TAKEI, continued from **Page 35**

that barbed wire fence. In 1965, he won the part of Hikaru Sulu on "Star Trek."

The show became iconic among science fiction fans, and its continuing popularity allows Takei to travel the world to Sci-Fi conventions. He will be in Atlanta Labor Day weekend, making several appearances at Dragon*Con, which takes place Aug. 29 - Sept. 1.

One of the first television shows to feature a racially diverse cast, "Star Trek" was a weekly morality play that attempted to show society as it could be.

Although he was part of an effort show an idealist's version of the future, Takei kept his life, including his sexual orientation, private.

"Producers are always looking for reasons to reject — too tall, too short, too gay — and I didn't want to give them any reason to reject me," Takei says. "Very frankly, I was living a double life. I dated women. I took them to premieres and so forth."

Still, despite his best efforts, his friends found out.

"Star Trek" became partially known for liberal use of green-painted, scantily dressed women, and handsome men in tight uniforms. It was these extras that unintentionally outed Takei to at least one of his co-stars. Walter Koenig ("Chekov") was drinking coffee one morning with Takei, and Koenig gestured in the direction of one particular extra.

"I looked over, and there was one extra in this sort of open-shirt uniform, and he was breathtaking," Takei says. "That was when I knew that Walter knew, and I said 'Walter, you're right.' So I was not out, but known."

In the 40 years since "Star Trek" began, Takei developed life-long friendships with cast and crew. He also spent plenty of time with "Star Trek" star William Shatner.

"Bill Shatner still cannot pronounce my name correctly," Takei says, throwing an unprompted dig at "Capitan Kirk" by explaining how "Star Trek" creator Gene Roddenbery got his name right on the second try.

"It's Takei, like toupee," he says. "You may have seen at his roast I tried to drive that into his brain, but I think I only got to the top of his head."

ON JUNE 17, TAKEI MADE MORE HISTORY, THIS time with his partner of 18 years, Brad Altman. The pair announced their upcoming marriage, marking the second time in two generations someone from Takei's family had to wait for the California Supreme Court before marrying a white man.

"My aunt, back in the '40s, wanted to marry a Caucasian man, and that couldn't be done until the California Supreme Court declared it equal in 1948, and they're still happily married," Takei says. "At that time, the rallying cry was the purity of the race. Now it's defined as a man or a woman. We're finding out what American democracy really is about. You should marry who you love, not artificially designated by gender."

The Takei-Altman wedding on Sept. 13 is to feature a broad swath of American diversity, with a little bit of show business thrown in.

"We wanted to craft a wedding that is tailor-made to say 'us,'" Takei says.

Koenig is the best man. Nichelle Nichols, who played Ohura, will be the "best lady."

"She didn't like the word 'matron,' so we changed it," Takei says.

A Mexican-American minister will preside; a Scottish bag pipe (Altman is part Scottish) will lead the party from the Democracy Forum to the Japanese American National Museum for the reception. The Los Angeles Gay Men's Choir is slated to perform, and a musician on the ancient Japanese instrument, the Koto, will play jazz.

"It's going to be a somewhat of a show bizzy, musical comedy oriented," Takei says. "As a matter of fact, our wedding march is going to be 'One Singular Sensation' from 'Chorus Line', so it might be a little bit toutou, but it's who we are; we love musicals."

DESPITE THE HUMOR TAKEI USES OCCASIONALLY to get his point across, he is serious about political involvement. In 1973, he narrowly lost a Los Angeles City Council seat. He later served on the Southern California Rapid Transit District Board, where he helped to create the city's metro system.

Takei has been out front on the same-sex marriage fight in California and has stayed active in civil rights work. One of the motivating factors behind his work are words his father said while still behind fences in an internment camp.

"Our father told us that our democracy is very fragile, and Americans can be swept up by hysteria when something like Pearl Harbor happens," Takei says. "So it's very important for good people to be actively involved in the political process, to hold democracy's feet to the fire."

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Continued from page 39

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New Kid coming out?

Jonathan Knight's 'shocker'

Jonathan Knight found the right stuff. (Photo by AP)

Yawn. Dish is bored because yet another former teen idol is inching his way out of the closet. **PEREZ HILTON** reports with absolute certainty that New Kids On The Block "singer" **JONATHAN KNIGHT** is living out and proud as a gay man.

"Jonathan has a [non-famous] boyfriend and they're very happy," an unnamed source told Perez. "They're not trying to hide it."

Normally, Dish chides obviously queer celebrities who won't go out and say it, but in this case, we find it refreshing.

Why? Knight hasn't been famous for close to 20 years and has no more rights to a public coming out than any average schmo. A New Kid coming out at the height of popularity would've been gossip fodder. A New Kid coming out now is simply filler for a slow news day.

Notice that Dish never said we are surprised. At this rate, straight teen idols are the exception. Real heteros don't appeal to the tween set. They're too hairy and aggressive for your average 13-year-old.

Perez also reports that Knight's boyfriend is named Harley and works as a trainer at a place called Barry's Bootcamp in Los Angeles. If only there was a joke in there somewhere ...

dish
There's a Fine Line Between Telling the Truth and Talking Trash

Girly gossip about 'Gossip' Guys

Whatever happened to "Night Court"? The happiest Dish has ever been was when we stayed up on school nights watching sitcoms like "Full House" and "Perfect Strangers."

Though the regular sex dreams about Balki Bartokomous were distracting, they were preferable to the current crop of teen dreck. If the cancellation of "The OC" and remaking of "Beverly Hills, 90210" weren't sure signs of pubescent apocalypse, then the CW Network's "Gossip Girl" surely is.

Hello? None of its delightfully ambiguous leads will own up to being gay.

Foppish Brit **ED WESTWICK**, who plays Chuck Bass on the show, has raised eyebrows by choosing equally sumptuous costar **CHASE CRAWFORD** as a roommate. However, it appears that the two are actually using both bedrooms. How sad.

"People think Chase is gay, and thought I was gay, that we were humping," he recently told Page Six Magazine. "It's not true, but hilarious."

That quote actually illuminates that Westwick is not a poof, but a virgin. Anyone who has actually experienced intercourse knows humping is what dogs do. A well-educated actor should refer to the act by its proper name: making snoo-snoo.

Ed Westwick (Photo by AP)

Golden good news, bitter bad news

Good news and bad news, dear readers. A highly attractive gay man took home a gold medal for diving, but **LINDSAY LOHAN** and **SAM RONSON** will not be spawning. Allow us to explain.

On Sunday, Australian diver **MATTHEW MITCHAM** plunged off the Olympic platform and took a gold medal as well as the highest score in Olympic diving history. That, combined with all the Speedo shots, ensured that Dish had a hard time keeping both hands on our remote. So congratulations!

Lindsay Lohan (Photo by AP)

But not so much to Lindsay Lohan. New York Daily News reports that she was spotted buying baby clothes with DJ Sam Ronson, the woman whom the whole world knows is Lindsay's girlfriend.

The cute twosome assured staff that neither of them was expecting. Dish is sad to hear this. We were hoping that Lindsay would soon hear the pitter-patter of little cocaine addictions.

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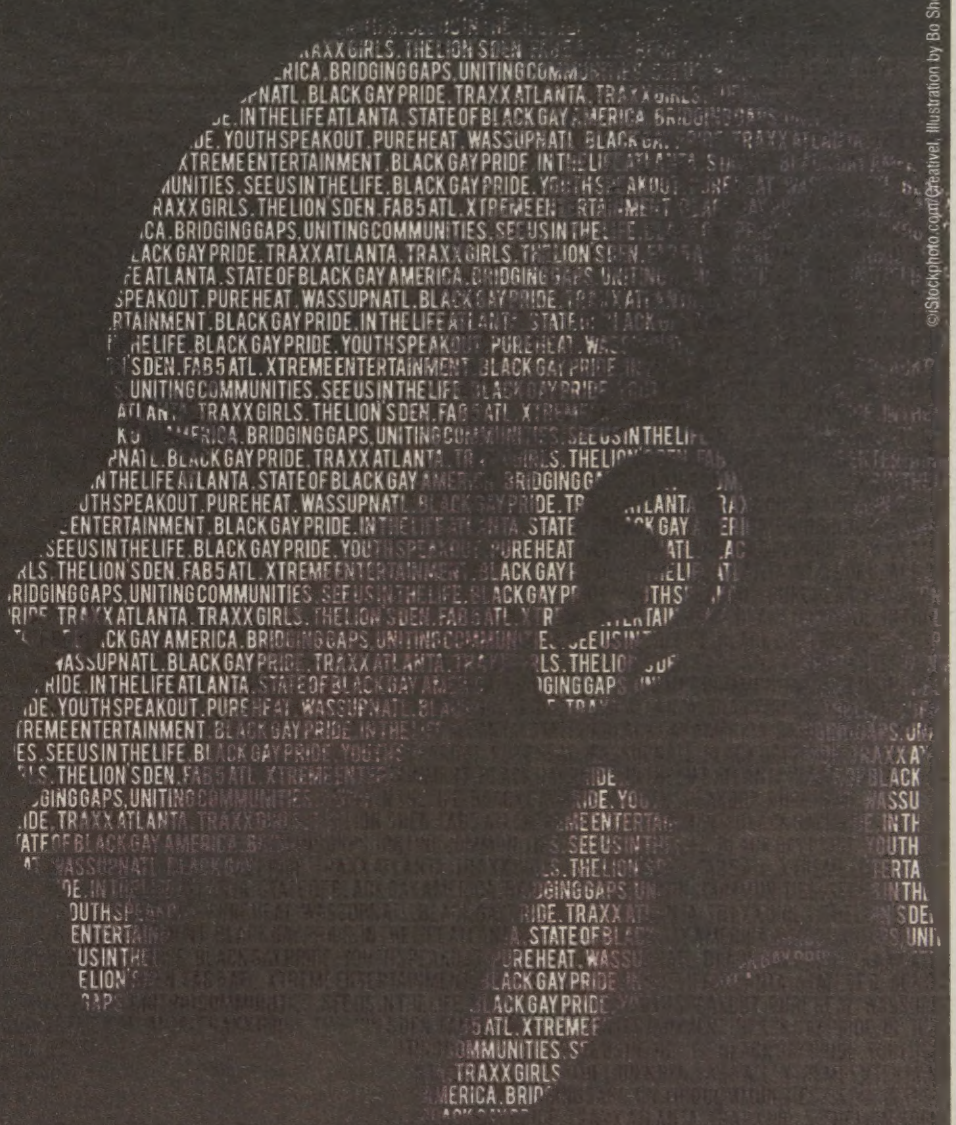
BLACK GAY PRIDE

COVERAGE STARTS ON PAGE 21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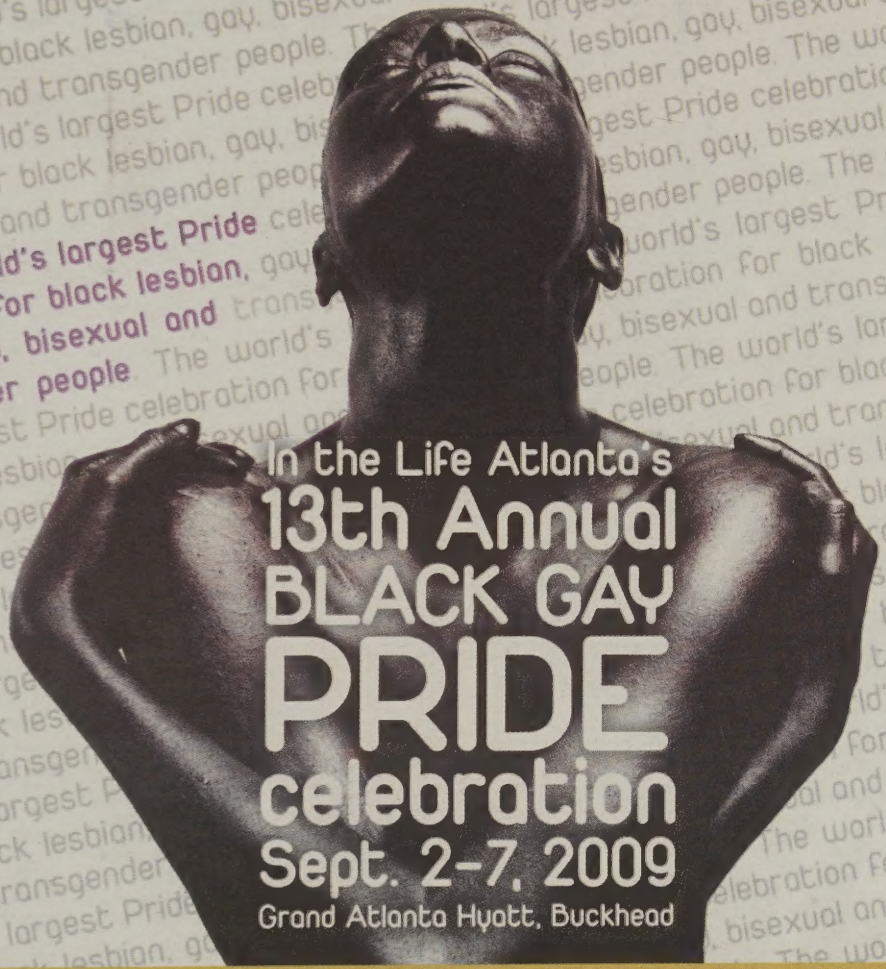
Pearl Day: Kelly Rowland on tap for 'gay day' at Six Flags. **Page 31**

Morehouse men: College aims to be beacon against homophobia. **Page 4**

Also inside: Full calendar of LGBT events for Labor Day weekend.



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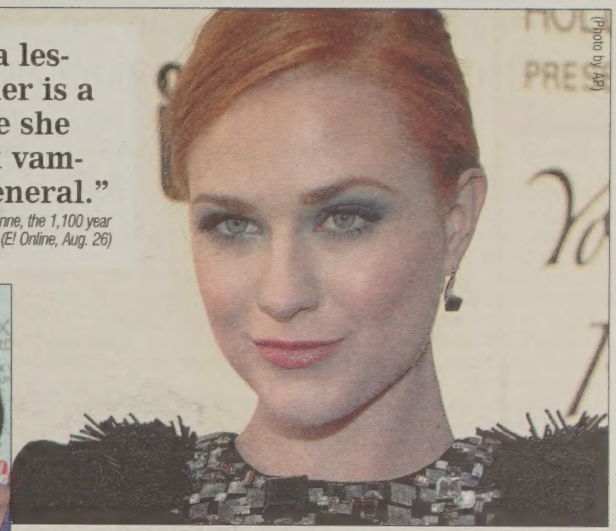
Associated Press

ON THE RECORD

"She's not necessarily a lesbian. Her human partner is a girl, but I'm pretty sure she goes both ways. I think vampires are like that in general."

*Actress **Evan Rachel Wood**, discussing Queen Sophie-Anne, the 1,100 year old Louisiana vampire she plays in HBO series "True Blood." (E! Online, Aug. 26)*


(Photo by AP)

"The fact that there is even a Republican saying, 'This is completely illegal, everybody has equal rights to happiness,' it's like, 'Oh good! I thought the world was round, and it is!'"

*Actress **Sigourney Weaver**, who earned an Emmy nomination for portraying the mother of a gay son in "Prayers for Bobby," on why she is happy that Ted Olson, a Republican, is one of the lead attorneys in a lawsuit to legalize gay marriage (E! Online, Aug. 28)*

Sigourney Weaver (Photo by AP)

"Where do you stop? I mean that's the problem going down that slippery road. Pretty soon we're going to have a special law for blue-eyed blondes ... or people who are losing their hair a little bit."

*Utah **Gov. Gary Herbert** on why the state doesn't need a law banning discrimination based on sexual orientation, although people should "do the right thing." (Associated Press, Aug. 27)*

Utah Gov. **Gary Herbert** (Photo courtesy utah.gov)

"We don't have an epidemic of blonde-haired, blue-eyed people getting fired or evicted. We do have a situation where gay and transgender people are being evicted and losing their jobs, not for job performance, but because they're gay or transgender."

Will Carlson of gay rights group Equality Utah, responding to Herbert. (Associated Press, Aug. 27)

"I find it beyond comprehension making us go do effectively a wedding challenge when at least three of us on that challenge aren't allowed in that institution."

Gay "Top Chef" contestant Ashley, expressing her frustration in having to cook for a wedding party when gay couples are not allowed to legally marry. (E! Online, Aug. 26)

"The attorney general's job is to represent the state and defend state law when there is a good-faith defense to be made. His representation should not be based on whether he likes the state law."

Wisconsin Gov. James E. Doyle on state Attorney General J. B. Van Hollen's refusal to defend a state law granting hospital visitation and other limited rights to gay couples (New York Times, Aug. 22)

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The Morehouse model

Can celebrated college lead the way on gay issues in the black community?

By RYAN LEE
rlee@sovo.com

William Bynum Jr. learned about mentorship during his youth, and believes its power has played, and continues to play, an integral part in his life and his work.

It was mentorship that helped lead Bynum from his childhood in Rocky Mountain, N.C., to earning a doctorate degree from Duke University and eventually becoming the newly installed vice president for student affairs at Morehouse College.

"I had an awesome, awesome experience in Rocky Mountain — the teachers, the coaches, the principals, they just did a great job," Bynum told Southern Voice during an interview at his Morehouse office Monday.

"Every now and then I wanted to subside to peer pressure or some of those things, and they just wouldn't let me slack off," he said. "They stayed on me, and that's what gave me that passion and let me know that I wanted to be in education, because those people really helped, not necessarily turn me around, but give me a different outlook on life."

And mentorship has been a hallmark in the 142-year history of Morehouse College, where generations of African-American men come for fellowship and growth at the all-male private school. Now, two of the school's most prominent mentors — Bynum and Morehouse President Robert Franklin — hope they can influence students' attitudes toward what Franklin called "the great challenge of this moment in history…our diversity of sexual orientation."

Franklin has made welcoming — even celebrating — gay students a pillar in his "Renaissance movement," an effort to encourage Morehouse students to be well read and traveled, to speak and dress appropriately, and to be respectful of people's differences.

In a remarkable speech at Morehouse last spring, Franklin told students that "straight men should learn more about the outlooks and contributions of gay men."

"Read a book by a gay author. Have an intelligent conversation with a gay neighbor," Franklin said, according to the Washington Post. "At a time when it was truly scandalous to have homosexual friends or associates, Dr. King looked to Bayard Rustin, a black gay man, as a trusted adviser. And Malcolm X regarded James Baldwin, a black gay man, as a brilliant chronicler of the black experience."

Franklin was unavailable for an interview, but as the leader of the student affairs division, Bynum said he's glad to be on the front lines of any potential flare-ups in tensions between gay and straight students. His academic background is in sociology, focusing on race, class and gender, and he said his Rocky Mountain upbringing taught him "how to treat people with dignity and respect."

"It gives me an excellent background to be able to talk with people about their perceptions, to be able to get rid of some of the ignorance, because in the end, that's what it ends up being: ignorance," he said. "When those discussions come up — around students, amongst faculty and staff — I'm very happy to be in the room because I can shed, I think, some light."

'Expand paradigms'

Mentorship has already been a key element of Daniel Edwards' Morehouse experience — from the Denver high school mentor who suggested he research going to Morehouse, to the classmates who helped him navigate his feelings as he struggled to accept his sexual orientation during his freshman year.

"I went through the fire, so to speak," said Edwards, who is now a junior and president of Safe Space, a gay student organization at Morehouse. "It was a lot of alone time in the dorm room, so it gave me a lot of time to think and be self-reflective. It was being stressed, not sleeping well because I just wasn't dealing with the basics of my humanity.

"I had pushed it so far to the back burners of my mind that is was starting to affect me physically, and so I just had to deal with it," Edwards said. "I had various friends — who are now my brothers — and mentors to talk to, to help me through that."

As encouraged as he was by Franklin's speech last spring, Edwards noted that it was in response to simmering tensions among students on campus, particularly around the way gay students comport themselves. In their desire to uphold and protect the mystique of the "Morehouse Man," some straight students believe that ideal is disrespected and emasculated by gay students who act or dress in a feminine manner, Edwards said.

"That has been the crown issue of right now," Edwards said. "Now it's not only how do you represent yourself, but how do you represent me, and the institution that you go to. What are you saying when you open your mouth in casual conversation, what are you saying when you walk outside of your dorm room and come on campus."

As noble as Franklin's initiative to eliminate profanity and sagging pants from the Morehouse image is, some worry that it will also prohibit students from dressing or behaving in non-gender conforming ways.

"For men who ascribe to a certain stereotypical clothing or behavior [for gay men], is there a place for them at Morehouse College, and is Morehouse College capable of educating and producing in them the same mystique and leadership that is engrained in the multitude of her other sons?" said Michael Brewer, who led Safe Space before graduating from Morehouse this year.

Morehouse President **Robert Franklin** has been an outspoken advocate for gay students since arriving at the school last year. (Photo courtesy Morehouse)

This, along with the college's attitudes toward transgender students, are lingering questions that Morehouse must confront, but which are sometimes downplayed by the administration, Brewer said. Still, he is more encouraged than ever that "the tides have changed" in Morehouse's relationship with its gay students.

"I believe that Dr. Franklin has really been a clarion for pushing for a more inclusive and progressive agenda on campus and in the larger Morehouse community," Brewer said. "I think the school is approaching an excellent opportunity to expand paradigms."

Focus on dorm life

Bynum is familiar with the school's reputation as a sometimes hostile environment for gay students, but said he hasn't witnessed or heard about anything since he arrived on campus July 1. On the heels of Franklin's speech, Bynum said Morehouse is taking several steps to head-off conflicts among students, and make "the college as hospitable as possible" for gay students.

Bynum is chairing the school's Task Force on Tolerance & Diversity, and said the committee would include gay members.

"It wouldn't be a worthwhile task force without them, quite frankly," he said.

The school's resident assistants and new student orientation leaders have all undergone training on how to deal with questions and conflicts related to sexual identity, and the RAs are preparing for a Sept. 26 weekend retreat that focuses on the same topic. Morehouse also received a grant to send resident assistants to a Washington, D.C., conference on gay student issues.

"If there is an issue, that's where it tends to be," Bynum said of dorm life, explaining Morehouse's focus on training resident leaders.

"What we're hoping is that because those students are our front line — and if there are any issues, they will probably be most likely to see those issues — they'll be able to do as I've done throughout my career: they'll be able to engage their peers and help them understand some of the things they've learned over the course of the training," Bynum said.

In Franklin's speech, the president said he hoped that Morehouse students would "use this opportunity to model something our community needs." Just as school officials hope that RA training will trickle down to the broader student population, Bynum said he hopes Morehouse students can be an example for the broader black community.

"We know that men of Morehouse are leaders — they're going to be the leaders in the community, they're going to be leaders on their job, they're going to be leaders in their different spheres of their life," Bynum said. "And so within their spheres of influence, our belief is that if we provide them with that kind of knowledge and understanding, then they'll be able to spread that in their spheres of influence as they go out and lead, both while they're here in college and in life after college.

"That ignorance will be stripped away, students will really learn as much as they can about those subjects, and then students will inform their peers and we'll get a better place, not only here at Morehouse but throughout the world," he said.

And while Morehouse officials are taking bold public steps to embrace gay students, they are also doing notable gestures behind the scenes.

"A lot of people don't know this," Brewer said, "but when I was honored as one of Out magazine's 'Out 100' in 2008 for my activism and advocacy at Morehouse on GLBT issues, Dr. Franklin actually paid for my room and travel to attend the event in New York."

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Most recent Piedmont Park stabbing not related to others, police say

But Atlanta PD remain mum on investigations into late-night attacks

By DYANA BAGBY
dbagby@sovo.com

A recent stabbing in Piedmont Park — the third in recent months — was apparently the result of an argument between two men who knew each other, according to an Atlanta Police Department report.

However, police have refused to return phone calls to Southern Voice asking for updates on the stabbings, including if there are any leads or suspects in the death of Patrick Boland.

Boland, 43, a gay man, was killed in the park during the early morning hours of May 28. Police said it appeared Boland was in the park cruising for sex. Another gay man was stabbed in the park May 28 at approximately the same time as Boland but did not suffer life-threatening injuries. Det. Michael Willis said in July police were investigating the attacks as possible hate crimes because both men were gay.

The most recent stabbing in the park occurred Aug. 8 at about 3 a.m. Officer Dani Lee Harris, LGBT liaison for the APD, said the victim survived. She said that because the attacker and the victim apparently knew each other, the case was also not likely to be considered related to the May 28 stabbings.

Harris referred additional questions about investigations into the crimes to Major Khyrus Williams, who supervises Zone 5 that includes Piedmont Park.

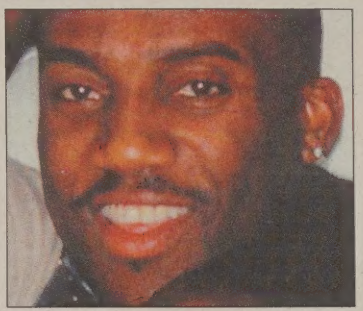
Williams said he could not talk about the Piedmont Park cases to the press without clearance from Sgt. L. Keyes, supervisor of the APD public affairs department. Keyes denied him permission to talk to Southern Voice for this story and instead told Williams to tell the newspaper to call her.

Numerous calls to Keyes were not returned.

Police silent on investigations

The victim of the Aug. 8 attack, a black male, was stabbed in the upper left back and in the lower abdomen. According to the police report, received by Southern Voice on Aug. 25 after making an open records request on Aug. 13, the victim said the name "Antoine" to police as he floated in and out of consciousness on a park bench shortly after being stabbed.

"The black male was found sitting on the bench wearing a black shirt and blue jeans. Both articles of clothing were soaked in blood. I struck the victim's face with the palm of my hand to keep him awake. He began to say the name 'Antoine.' I asked if this was the name of his attacker and he repeated the name," states the report by Officer A. Blasini.



The Atlanta Police Department has not made any arrests in the stabbing death of **Patrick Boland**, a gay man killed in Piedmont Park on May 28. Another stabbing in the park on Aug. 8 is likely not related to Boland's death, police say. (Photo courtesy APD)

A witness to the stabbing, Gregory Astin, 49, of Stone Mountain, told Southern Voice he was sitting on a park bench when the two men came up to him and the three started talking. Astin said he got up to let the two men sit together on a park bench when an argument broke out between them.

"They talked like they knew each other. Then they started exchanging words and it kind of escalated," Astin said. Astin said the two men were drinking alcohol.

"I noticed one guy pull out a knife or something from a tote bag and he stuck the other guy with it. He did it twice," Astin said. The APD report states Astin was detained by police after he was seen fleeing the scene.

When asked for this story what he was doing in the park at 3 a.m. and specifically if he was cruising, Astin said he didn't know anything about cruising and was just "chilling" in the park and didn't realize how late it was until police told him the park closed at 11 p.m.

"I didn't realize it was after hours," he said. "I was chilling and they sat down and we were all getting to know each other."

Astin was not charged with a crime.

Southern Voice made an open records request to the APD on Aug. 13 for all incident reports occurring in Piedmont Park on Aug. 8-9.

According to state law, public institutions have three days to respond to an open records request. Despite numerous calls for follow up on the request, the police report on the Aug. 8 stabbing was not received until 12 days later. A police recruit also called on Aug. 25 to say the open records request had been received and it would take two weeks to process.

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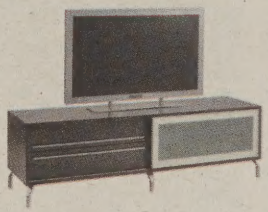

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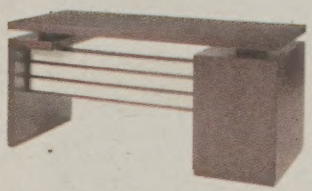

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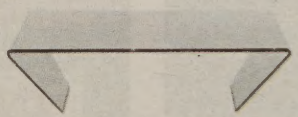

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DeKalb: Bullying not cause of student's suicide

Report cites multiple issues troubling Jaheem Herrera

By MATT SCHAFER
mschafer@sovo.com

The DeKalb County School System has released a written report detailing the system's findings on the suicide of Jaheem Herrera, an 11-year-old fifth grade student who hanged himself April 16.

The 300-plus page report was submitted to the school system by retired Fulton County Superior Court Judge Thelma Moore on Aug. 14 and released to the public by the school system on Aug. 26. Moore was hired by the system to investigate Herrera's death after his mother alleged her son's suicide stemmed from constant bullying, including being called gay, at his school, Dunaire Elementary.

Moore made an oral presentation to the media and the members of the DeKalb County School board about the factors contributing to Herrera's death at a press conference in May. At the time, she stated the school system was not at fault in Herrera's death, including that he was not bullied and that when students called him "gay" they meant "happy."

The new written report also details the criminal history of Norman Keene, who is described as the "significant other" of Masika Bermudez, Herrera's mother. This information was not discussed at the May press conference.

According to Moore's report, Keene became physically abusive toward Bermudez during an argument and attacked her in 2006 while they were living in Rockdale County. He pleaded guilty and received probation. The report also contained legal filings detailing Keene's brushes with the law on weapons charges and assault charges going back to 1993.

Bermudez spoke briefly at a news conference held Aug. 28 by the family's attorney, Gerald Griggs. Bermudez responded to the report by saying, "Don't listen to them" and "All I want is justice," the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported.

Griggs also said the abuse was a "non-issue" and the written repot is "an attempt to bully Jaheem twice." Also speaking in favor of Bermudez were State Sen. Vincent Fort and former Atlanta City councilmember Derek Boazman.

Griggs did not respond to interview requests from Southern Voice by press time.

Report can't confirm anti-gay bullying

Although the written report is largely a transcript of Moore's remarks from the May press conference, there are several facets that were not previously discussed. Moore's investigation reported that Herrera wasn't bullied, but had fights with friends, and that the cause of one fight was a rivalry with another student as the result of a math contest.

In another issue not raised at the press conference, the report also suggests that Herrera's hanging might not have been a suicide, but rather a botched attempt at the "choking game." The report describes the choking game as "where another student puts another student in a wrestling chokehold" for an adrenaline rush.

In her report Moore concludes that Herrera was likely called gay, or at least a pink backpack he brought to school was called gay.

But Moore said she could not identify any one student or any instance when Herrera was actually called gay, because while students said Herrera was called gay, none would supply any names. Therefore Moore concluded that there was not a group of children bullying Herrera.

"We found no evidence or witnesses to support the allegation that Jaheem was teased, because he looked different or spoke differently. We did not identify a person or a specific and verifiable incident were Jaheem was called 'gay,' or 'snitch,'" Moore wrote.

"Finally, our investigation did not reveal a person or particular group who behaved in a harassing manner toward Jaheem. In fact, the evidence suggests that Jaheem was at times friends with the boys with whom he fought."

Jaheem Herrera took his own life April 16. DeKalb school leaders dispute his mother's claim that bullying, including anti-gay taunts, played a major role in the tragedy. (Photo by Matt Schafer)

Children who were interviewed told Moore that while Herrera and other children might have been called gay, it was done out of the earshot of teachers, and it was rarely, if ever, reported. Moore stated that the school did act appropriately, but also notes Dunaire was understaffed, suggesting the school add another assistant principal, counselor and a full-time social worker.

The report suggested there were several other factors that affected Herrera's life in the months before his death. His grandmother, who he was close to, died in October. Herrera also told school officials of an uncle who had died in gang related violence in front of him, that he was homesick for St. Croix, and that he had an unstable family situation.

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Mayoral candidate Jesse Spikes believes in 'fairness' for all

Gay candidates in, out of local races

By MATT SCHAFER
mschafer@sovo.com

Jessie Spikes, considered to be the fourth-place challenger in this year's Atlanta mayoral race, recently sat down with Southern Voice to discuss his views on gay issues.

Unlike Mary Norwood, Lisa Borders, and Kasim Reed, the top contenders in the race, Spikes doesn't have a decade-long track record of involvement with the gay community, but pledged to be open and honest with the city and its constituents.

"It's hard to say, 'Trust me,' [when] these people have records and you don't. But I am saying trust me because I'm a person of integrity and fairness and I think my life demonstrates that," Spikes said. "I'm not a politician, I won't make political choices, I will make the hard choices, no matter what they are."

Spikes has never held public office. He is a partner at McKenna Long & Aldridge, an international law firm, and has worked 30 years as a corporate lawyer.

Where the other mayoral contenders have researched opinions on issues of concern to gay voters, Spikes said one of his strongest assets is that he would enter office with an open mind.

"I'm a fellow that believes in fairness, and I'm going to be fair to everyone and I'm not going to be political about it," Spikes said. "I believe in inclusiveness, because my philosophy of how you govern the city of Atlanta is that you create an environment where you invite the submissions of the best ideas and you evaluate those ideas with the best mind, and in saying that I have no bias about where those ideas might come from."

Spikes had the same position on a number of issues including Piedmont Park, nightlife and public safety.

"Well again, you need to have input, you have to have the facts," Spikes said on whether Class A festivals like Atlanta Pride should be allowed to return to the park next year.

"It was done because it was deemed to be important to the condition of the park, and whomever is making that decision will decide based on what is being predicted. If you have a situation where you honestly believe it would be a threat to the health and well being of the park then you do need to consider an alternative," he said. "Can you do it now? I don't know. I'm not involved in that discussion, but [if] whatever has caused them not to is no longer in place, you ought to accommodate the parade."

Gross challenges Jacbos again

Gay candidate Keith Gross is making another attempt to unseat Mike Jacobs, the gay-friendly Republican who represents DeKalb-based House District 80 in the Georgia General Assembly.

Gross filed paperwork June 10 with the State Ethics Commission to begin collecting campaign contributions for the 2010 race. Gross first sought the seat in 2008, but a judge kicked him off the ballot for not meeting residency requirements.

Jacobs has also filed paperwork to seek re-election to the seat.

Gross' paperwork lists Steve Acuna as his campaign chair again for this race. Steven Golden is listed as the campaign treasurer.

Acuna confirmed in an interview that Gross is running again.

Gross launched a campaign against Jacobs in 2008, but was disqualified by Administrative Law Judge Michael M. Malihi, who found that Gross had not maintained a residence in Georgia for the required three years prior to running for office.

Gross has described himself as a self-made business man and said he started his first company while in high school in Florida. He later bought and sold Little Bear Chocolates in San Francisco and Chris' Steakhouse in Gaithersburg, Md. During his previous race, he refused to release his resume to Southern Voice. Gross said he doesn't have a resume because he has either owned his own businesses or has been self-employed.

Malihi found that Gross did not maintain the three-year Georgia residency requirement because he lived in Maryland during 2006 and therefore could not run for office here in 2008.

"I think we were unquestionably qualified to run last time too, but this time Keith is definitely qualified to run," Acuna said.

Gross did sign a lease on an apartment in 2007, but has since moved to another apartment in the district, Acuna said.

Although Gross was removed before the July 15, 2008, Democratic primary, his name remained on the ballot and he received 1,523 votes. Jacobs received 793 votes on the separate Republican primary ballot. Turnout in the July primary may have skewed Democratic because of a hotly contested Senate primary and a relatively quiet Republican ballot, but Acuna said the results of the primary are encouraging.

"If I was the Jacobs campaign I would be kind of nervous at this point," Acuna said.

Gross attended Southern Voice's Best of Gay Atlanta party in July, where he said he was the owner of Sprouts Green Café in the Emory Village.

Hudson drops out of East Point race

Kevin Hudson, a gay East Point resident, announced Aug. 27 he will no longer seek a return to the City Council in the Atlanta suburb.

Clockwise from top left: **Jesse Spikes**, **Keith Gross**, **Kevin Hudson** (Courtesy photos)

Hudson was appointed to the East Point City Council in 2007 when councilmember Gregory Fann Sr. was under investigation for allegedly misusing city resources.

At the time of his appointment, Hudson had never held public office before, but had chaired several local civic organizations such as the Main Street Board and Hillcrest Cemetery Memorial Association. He had lived in East Point, which is located about 15 minutes south of downtown Atlanta, for seven years.

Gov. Sonny Perdue issued an executive order that suspended Fann from public office "pending the disposition of the case or until the expiration of his term of office, whichever occurs first." Fann was accused of using city employees to do personal work at his home.

Fann was allowed to return to the council in April of this year, ending Hudson's tenure.

In June, Hudson told Southern Voice he planned to run for a full term as the Council's Ward A at-large representative.

But he issued a public letter last week announcing his decision to drop out of the race and asked his supporters to back Sharonda Hubbard in the race.

"Over the past several weeks I have been looking at all the options I have for my life, both personal and public, and have decided that now is not the time for me to commit to a four-year term on the East Point City Council (Ward A, At-Large)," Hudson wrote. "I know there is a place for me to continue my involvement in making East Point a better place for all citizens and I hope to find the right answer soon."

Hudson's decision leaves one openly gay candidate, Eric Morrow, still seeking a seat on the East Point City Council this year. East Point City Councilmember Lance Rhodes, who is gay, is not up for re-election this year.

— Laura Douglas-Brown contributed

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Paying tribute to the 'queen of Atlanta'

John Speaks remembered by friends, loved ones at Outwrite

By DYANA BAGBY
dbagby@sovo.com

Dozens of people packed Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse Aut. 31 to pay tribute to John Speaks, the store's most "loyal customer" as well as a friend to numerous people in Atlanta's LGBT community who called him the "Queen of Atlanta."

Speaks, 64, died Aug. 27 of a heart attack. A graveside service was held earlier Aug. 31 at Greenwood Cemetery.

"He was here all the time," said Outwrite owner Philip Rafshoon. "He was one of our most loyal customers ever. He was one of the most interesting persons I've ever met. He was a leader because he knew how to mentor.

"He knew everything about everyone — and some days we absolutely hated him for it," Rafshoon said to laughter, "but most days we absolutely loved him. He was a friend."

Nearly 20 people shared memories of Speaks, most noting his extensive travels and extensive knowledge on just about any topic — from literature to art, politics, various cultures and religions and, yes, local gossip.

"What a hard week it's been — we've lost the lion in the Senate and now the queen of Atlanta," said friend Jess Bowling. "I loved John very much. He was magical."

Franklin Abbott, a local writer and poet, knew Speaks for 25 years and noted his friend traveled to every continent, including Antarctica.

"We worked together with the Pro-Feminist Men's Movement and organized conferences. I knew John when he was married and I knew him when he came out. He had more energy than most teenagers," Abbott said. "He was interested in everyone and everything ... and he had a way of extracting secrets from everyone."

Speaks was married to his wife, Linda, for 30 years, before she died in 1997.

Never a stranger

Umayr Hassan, outreach coordinator for Trikone, the South Asian LGBT group in Atlanta, said he knew Speaks only for about eight months but in that time, through their conversations at Outwrite and at Trikone socials, he knew Speaks was a special man.

"He was culturally aware and sensitive and would ask penetrating questions," said Hassan, who is from Pakistan. "He had a constant curiosity."

Deepali Gokhale, who met Speaks nine years ago at Hoedowns, learned about Speaks' travels to South Asia where he worked in textiles. He told her he missed the South Asian culture and she invited him to Trikone social events, which he regularly attended for nearly a decade.

"He was brilliantly intelligent but so modest ... and charming all at the same time," she said. "You never had a boring conversation with John Speaks. He really was radical because he was one of the most loving persons on earth — and love itself is radical."

Others said it would be hard coming to Outwrite and not seeing Speaks in the store. Many told of how he was one of the first people they met when they moved to Atlanta and how he helped guide them in finding gay organizations and other LGBT peers.

"Is there anyone more aptly named than John Speaks? The child could talk," said Craig Washington, a longtime AIDS activist.

"I met him here and he taught me many lessons — being present in the moment; he was so engaging, such a courageous thinker, lover, doer. And he was always pushing us in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community. He really believed in freedom," Washington added, breaking down in tears.

Gus Kaufman, who helped found Men Stopping Violence with the help of Speaks, said, "There was no world he felt a stranger to."

One of the final speakers was Speaks' young grandson, who said, "He always loved me and was always nice to me. I loved him a lot and he loved me a lot, too."

John Speaks, 64, a regular at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse, died Aug. 27. (File photo)

According to a family-placed death notice, Speaks taught English as a Second Language at Georgia Perimeter College. His survivors include sons John and Jacob Speaks; his partner, Corey Green; parents Rev. John T. and Martha Speaks; sister Henrietta Speaks, daughters-in-law Susan Shirley and Jennifer Hamilton; and grandchildren Morgan Russell and John Speaks IV.

In lieu of flowers, Speaks' family asks friends and loved ones to make contributions to the progressive cause of their choosing.

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N.Y. congressional race defies expectations

Republican backs same-sex marriage, Democrat opposes it

By CHRIS JOHNSON

Gay Republicans are rallying behind a New York GOP candidate who favors same-sex marriage in her bid for the U.S. House against a Democratic contender who opposes marriage rights for gays.

Diedre "Dede" Scozzafava, a Republican New York state Assembly member, is seeking to represent her state's 23rd congressional district. A member of the Assembly since 1999, Scozzafava voted in 2007 and again earlier this year in favor of bills to legalize same-sex marriage in New York.

She's facing off against Democrat Bill Owens, a Plattsburgh, N.Y., attorney, who last month said in a radio interview that he doesn't support same-sex marriage. Doug Hoffman, a Lake Placid accountant, is running on the ticket for New York's Conservative Party.

The seat will become vacant after the U.S. Senate confirms Rep. John McHugh (R-N.Y.) as Army secretary. Lawmakers are expected to confirm McHugh to the position shortly after they return from the August recess.

McHugh must resign his congressional seat before New York Gov. David Paterson (D) can call for a special election, but some media outlets have speculated that the vote would take place on Election Day in November.

Charles Moran, a Log Cabin spokesperson, said Scozzafava represents the views of New York's 23rd congressional district because "she fiscally is fairly conservative, but ... on the social issues she's very much mainstream in what the district believes in and also what America believes in with marriage equality."

"We love Dede," he said. "This is a district where Dede has represented and lived for many years and this is just another example of Republicans continuing to push for an inclusive message."

Scozzafava, whose campaign didn't respond to a request for comment, was quoted in a July 24 article in the Politico voicing support for same-sex marriage.

"I'm pro-choice, and I also support gay marriage," she said. "The leadership might not like that — but the people that I'm closest to have voted for me, know me, and they're very supportive."

But one group opposed to same-sex marriage is infuriated over Scozzafava's position. Brian Brown, executive director of the National Organization for Marriage, said his organization contacted New York Republican officials and asked them to remove Scozzafava as their nominee in the race.

"It is a slap in the face to the voters of this district," he said. "This is a socially conservative district and we hope that the nomination will be removed and someone else will be put in her place because this is not a good move for the Republican Party by any stretch."

Scozzafava's marriage position contrasts with that of her Democratic opponent. Owens, the Democratic contender for the House seat, told North County Public Radio on Aug. 12 that he doesn't support marriage rights for same-sex couples.

Republican **Dede Scozzafava** supports gay marriage. Democrat **Bill Owens** is opposed. (Campaign photos)

"People who are seeking civil unions should have that option," Owens said. "However, I think that the word 'marriage' has some very important religious connotations and I would not be in support of a bill that addressed it in that fashion. But I certainly fully support civil rights for everyone in every area."

The National Stonewall Democrats didn't respond to a request for comment on Owens' marriage stance.

Texas liquor board fires 3 over raid on gay bar

Gay activists demanded answers after police in Fort Worth, Texas, arrested seven gay bar customers for public intoxication. (Photo courtesy of Tamme Nash/Dallas Voice)

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — Texas' liquor board fired two agents and a supervisor, disciplined two other supervisors and changed several policies in the wake of a raid at a gay bar that left a customer seriously injured and led to protests, officials announced last week.

The Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission said agent Christopher Aller and agent trainee Jason Chapman, who participated in the June 28 raid at the Rainbow Lounge, were fired Friday. Their supervisor, Sgt. Terry Parsons, was not at the Fort Worth bar that night but also was fired, effective Sept. 2.

Aller and Chapman failed to report that they used force when arresting the customer or that he was seriously injured, according to a report on the agency's investigation. They also were accused of participating in the raid without their supervisor's approval, disrupting the business during the raid and wearing improper attire, the report says.

Parsons failed to ensure that the agents submitted a report on using force during the arrest, did not take appropriate action after learning they didn't wear proper attire and did not notify supervisors that multiple arrests had been made that night, the report says.

The commission said Parsons' direct supervisor, Lt. Gene Anderson, would be suspended without pay for three days and be on probation for six months, and Capt. Robert Cloud, who oversees the Dallas and Fort Worth TABC offices, has received a written reprimand. Both inadequately monitored new agents' training and inadequately supervised Fort Worth employees and their activities, the agency said.

IN BRIEF *Find the latest in LGBT news across the nation @* **sovo.com**

Same-sex marriages begin in Vt.

DUXBURY, Vt. (AP) — After 17 years together, Bill Slimback and Bob Sullivan couldn't wait another minute to get married. So they didn't.

With Vermont's new law allowing same-sex marriage only a minute old, they tied the knot in a midnight ceremony at a rustic lodge, becoming one of the first couples to legally wed under a law that took effect at midnight Sept. 1.

"It feels wonderful," said Slimback, 38, an out-of-work Teamster who is taking Sullivan's last name as his own. "It's a day I've been long waiting for, and a day I truly honestly thought would never come."

Slimback said he and Sullivan, 41, have long wanted to cement their relationship with a wedding, but since they couldn't legally marry in New York they chose to wed even before Vermont's gay marriage era officially dawned.

Vermont is one of five states that now allow same-sex couples to marry. Massachusetts, Connecticut and Iowa are the others. New Hampshire's law takes effect Jan. 1, 2010. A sixth state, Maine, has approved marriage for same-sex couples, but the measure faces a ballot challenge.

Vermont, which invented civil unions in 2000 after a same-sex couple challenged the inequality of state marriage statutes, was a mecca for gay couples who to that point had no way to officially recognize their relationships. In April, Vermont became the first state to legalize gay marriage through a legislative decree and not a court case.

DP law to face voters in Washington State

KOLYMPIA, Wash. — A referendum that could overturn Washington state's "everything but marriage" domestic partnership law has qualified for the November ballot.

The secretary of state's office said Monday that sponsors of Referendum 71 had 121,486 valid petition signatures — enough to put the newly expanded domestic partnership law to a public vote.

A secondary check of rejected signatures was not complete, so the number could increase.

The new law was supposed to take effect July 26 but was delayed until the signature count was complete. Now, it won't take effect unless it is approved in the Nov. 3 election.

The measure would expand existing domestic partnerships to give same-sex couples all the state-provided benefits provided to married opposite-sex couples.

Out-of-state couples flock to Iowa to wed

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Data show that same-sex couples are coming from other states to get married in Iowa.

An Iowa Supreme Court ruling in April legalized same-sex marriage in the state. The Des Moines Register reports that since the April ruling, state data show about 45 percent of Iowa's same-sex marriages were between out-of-state couples.

Between April 27 and July 27 there were 5,214 marriage certificates issued statewide. Of those, 676 were for same-sex couples. Gender was concealed on 339 marriage certificates.

Of the 676 same-sex couples, 312 couples weren't from Iowa. They were from neighboring states. Data show 57 couples were from Illinois, 38 were from Nebraska, 37 were from Missouri and 36 were from Minnesota.

City of Reno approves domestic partner benefits

RENO, Nev. (AP) — The city of Reno has become the latest local government entity in Nevada to extend benefits to the domestic partners of its employees.

The Reno City Council last week unanimously adopted a resolution that will extend health care benefits to domestic partners, whether gay or straight, who register with the Nevada secretary of state.

Council members do not think the action will cost the city much money, even though they have not yet received an analysis of potential costs.

Lee Rowland, attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union, expects the change to add dozens of people, not hundreds, to the city's health insurance program.

– Associated Press

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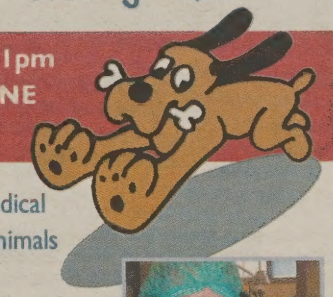

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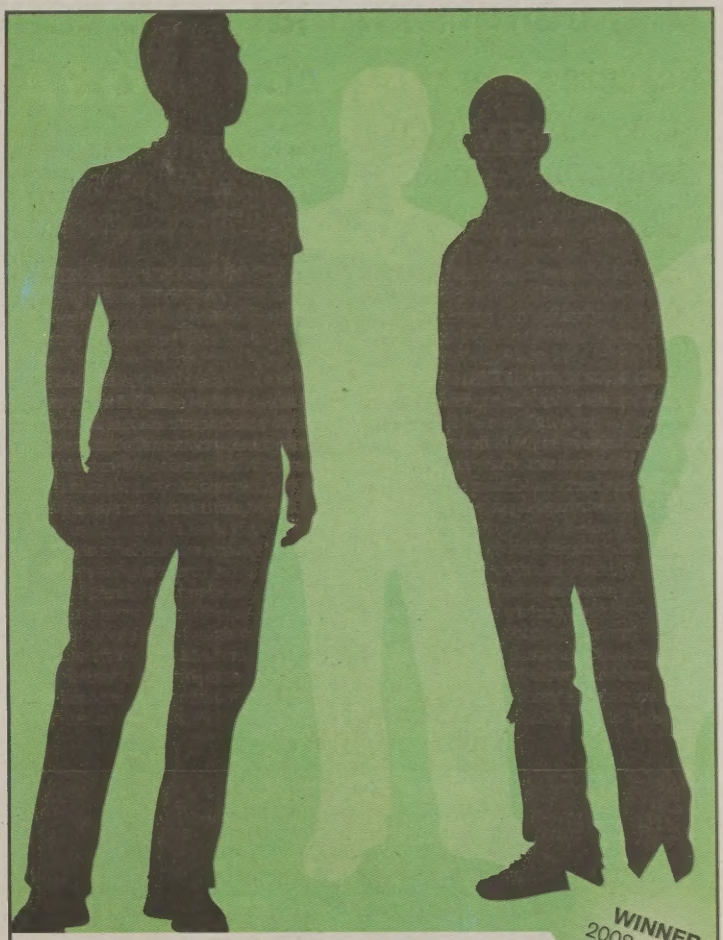

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VIEWPOINT

WNBA confused on sex, gender

League shouldn't force players into feminine, 'family friendly' mold

By DIONNE BATES

I HAVE FOLLOWED THE WNBA SINCE 1997 AND I remember the first game I saw. Teresa Weatherspoon, Rebecca Lobo and the New York Liberty took on Lisa Leslie, Mwadi Mabika and the Los Angeles Sparks. Two professional basketball teams from two great cities, made up of all women, on national television. What a historic day for television, basketball, sports, women, girls, and yes, the world!

I was overjoyed that I was able to watch professional women play professional basketball on national television. I was ecstatic when the WNBA brought a franchise to Atlanta. After all, Atlanta once had an American Basketball League team and it only seemed right that the WNBA would come here too.

Now, with their last regular season home game set for Sept. 11, the Atlanta Dream is ranked number two in the Eastern Conference and I am probably the most excited fan in Atlanta.

IN JUNE, SOUTHERN VOICE RAN AN ARTICLE entitled "Full court pressure: Atlanta Dream and WNBA face lesbian stigma in battle for fans." The article reported that the WNBA, in an effort to market itself "family friendly," has attempted to influence and train players to be feminine "as a way to slide past the perception of being a league filled with gay, butch, women."

The WNBA, just by its existence, has done a lot to discredit archaic gender and sex role expectations that society continues to perpetuate. Though a dedicated WNBA and Dream fan, I have to consider that the WNBA, if in fact the league is trying to "train" its players to be "feminine and pretty," is undermining the work that it has done (whether purposely or not) to eradicate these views and expectations.

It is first important to distinguish sex from gender. Though they may be connected, gender and sex are not the same and cause confusion for many. This may be because many identity theorists define the terms differently and the terms are often used interchangeably (albeit incorrectly) by the general public, including the LGBT community.

While these terms can be very complex, at the very basic core, sex refers to the biological division of male and female, while gender refers to femininity and masculinity. We have seen this issue recently played out in the media pertaining to South African runner Caster Semenya. As a result of an uneducated few, this young woman's sex has come into question because certain traits of her gender (e.g. speed, voice tone, and muscular structure) do not fit the "cookie cutter" mold of their misinformed ideology of male/female gender and gender roles.

While women are typically seen as feminine and men masculine, some women are more masculine than others and some men are more feminine than others. This does not negate the fact that such women are women and such men are men. Further, just because a woman appears more masculine does not necessarily mean that she is lesbian and just because a man appears more feminine does not necessarily mean that he is gay.

THIS IDEA THAT WOMEN AND MEN WHO DO NOT "fit" society's views of how women and men should look must be gay is a mentality that must be overcome by the general public. This mentality stems from the gender roles to which we as men and women have historically been expected to adhere. These roles, or rather the misconceptions and myths of these roles, are rooted in an oppressive, unexposed, unhealthy, heterosexist, patriarchal worldview.

The fact of the matter is that a heterosexual woman may enjoy running, playing professional basketball or repairing a car engine, but it does not make her a lesbian any more than being a cheerleader or enjoying cooking makes a heterosexual man gay.

Interestingly, the Atlanta Dream has several male cheerleaders, a sport that has traditionally been considered for females. Does the WNBA "train" its male cheerleaders (both gay and straight) to be more masculine in an effort to keep them from appearing too gay?

In addition to undermining its efforts to overcome oppressive views of sex and gender roles, the WNBA should also consider the possible emotional and mental risks that some players may face, on or off the court, when steered away from what is innately and authentically a part of their identity.

With regards to sexual orientation, gay professional athletes like John Amaechi, Esera Tuaolo, David Kopay and Roy Simmons have openly discussed the emotional turmoil and sacrifices of trying to be someone that they innately were not so that they could fit in, maintain their physical safety, and maintain their jobs.

IN THE MIDST OF ALL OF THIS, AS THE SOUTHERN Voice article stated, "most fans just want to see a good game." As an identity specialist and mental health clinician, I maintain that some players may have difficulty bringing their "A game" when faced with having to change who they are to be affirmed and accepted.

As fans, yes, we want to see a good game. But just as players must be physically healthy to win games, they must also be emotionally and mentally healthy. The WNBA may have players (gay and straight) who do not express themselves as femininely as some other players, as well as lesbian players.

While the lesbian players may not see the need to come out as Sheryl Swoopes (who, by the way, is a very feminine female despite her sexual orientation), those who opt to do so should be able to disclose their identity without concern of their career being in jeopardy.

AS FOR THE WNBA WANTING TO MARKET ITSELF as "family friendly," this discriminatory position perpetuates the misconception that LGBT individuals do not and cannot have families. LGBT individuals have mothers, fathers, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, partners, and yes, even children — components that make up a heterosexual family.

I observe several LGBT fans with their families (including their children) when I attend Dream games. It has already been established that just as there are straight players, there are lesbian players in the WNBA. Some of these players helped the Dream earn number two status in the Eastern Conference.

When will these players and LGBT fans be included in the "family friendly" equation?

Dr. Dionne Bates is a licensed professional counselor in Atlanta. She can be reached through her website at www.drdbates.com.

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Becoming a man

Atlanta Pride's festival director comes out as transgender

By DYANA BAGBY
dbagby@sovo.com

J. Sheffield, festival director for Atlanta Pride, began transitioning to a man last year. (Photo by Dyana Bagby)

WHEN J. SHEFFIELD LOOKS IN THE MIRROR, HE doesn't see the person he knows he is.

Sheffield, 29, is the festival director of Atlanta Pride and has worked for the Atlanta Pride Committee for 10 years. But many people still know him as Jennifer Sheffield.

About a year ago, Sheffield began his transition to male, first by dropping the name "Jennifer" and preferring to be called J. or simply Shef. And, of course, asking the correct male pronoun is used. He hasn't started hormones yet, so his body hasn't taken the shape he sees in his mind.

"I see a different person in the mirror than who I know I am," he says. "My voice isn't lower like I imagine it. For me, I created a different image in my head than what I look like on the outside.

"What you have going on up here," he says, pointing to his head, "doesn't match reality."

KNOWING HE WAS MALE BORN IN A FEMALE body "is always something that was there," Sheffield says.

"I actually considered it [transitioning], seriously considered it, about five years ago … but relationships develop, not only personal, but professional. I was already different as a gay person — but there is only so long you can go on like that and continue to be happy," he says.

Working on Atlanta Pride last year was difficult. After being booted from Piedmont Park along with other Class A festivals due to drought concerns, the three-day event was forced to relocate to the Atlanta Civic Center. The move was disastrous, with Atlanta Pride losing $160,000 and Executive Director Donna Narducci and Sheffield, who were paid staff, resigning their posts as a result.

Sheffield was later rehired, and is working on this year's festival, which is set for Oct. 31 to Nov. 1 in Piedmont Park.

"Pride is very important to me and it was a rough year last year, plus the stressors of my personal life … being trans and not out is a big burden to carry. It's like a ticking time bomb," he says. "I was pretty low and knew I had to let go of something and decided I have to let go of this."

DURING HIS HIATUS FROM ATLANTA PRIDE, Sheffield attended UGA working towards a bachelor's degree in Women's Studies. As part of his transition process, he dropped the name "Jennifer" in the university's paper work. After coming back to Pride, business cards identified him as J. Sheffield.

"Once I took charge of my name, I started expanding my circle and sharing this information with more people," he says.

This sharing included writing a letter to close friends, his siblings and family members, as well as to the Pride Committee.

Everyone who responded to the letter, including the Pride Committee, was very supportive, and many were actually not surprised. But not everyone responded. Even active members of the LGBT community, he says, don't understand transgender people and trans issues. The potential for marginalization is much greater for trans people.

"There are some complexities that are not the same," Sheffield says.

GROWING UP IN RICO, GA., A TINY TOWN WEST of Atlanta in South Fulton County (and now known officially as Chattahoochee Hill Country), Sheffield knew he was different at a young age. When he was in the third grade, Sheffield said he knew he was gay. He remembers praying he wasn't "because it was a bad thing to be."

He was inconsolable when made to wear dresses as a little girl, and getting a haircut was traumatic because his mother wanted him to have curly hair while he wanted a short boy's cut.

His mother wanted to put him in a clogging class with his sister when he was young, but the thought of wearing those frilly dresses mortified Sheffield, he says. After crying for one week straight, his mother allowed him to take karate lessons instead.

When it came time to start wearing a bra in the fifth grade, Sheffield said it was "horrific."

"I would have had top surgery in the fifth grade if they would have allowed it," he says, "and I was pretty vocal about it then. I definitely would love to see that [surgery] happen someday."

SHEFFIELD CAME OUT AS GAY AT 16 AND STARTED dating girls. In college, he was co-director of the campus LGBT student group and identified as a lesbian, but never felt comfortable with the word.

"I guess internally I identified as trans and it almost felt like lying using the word lesbian," he says.

While studying Women's Studies at UGA, he took his first transgender class with students known as Katz and Rocket, who identified as transgender and who became the band the Athens Boys Choir; Katz is now the only member of the band.

"That class was the first real straightforward understanding for me of what it meant to be trans," Sheffield says.

Sheffield worked for State Rep. Karla Drenner (D-Avondale Estates), Georgia's first openly gay state legislator, during her first session; Drenner is now serving her fifth term. He also worked for Georgia Equality in the unsuccessful battle to keep the constitutional amendment banning gay marriage off the ballot in 2004.

While understanding what it meant to be transgender, he wasn't comfortable coming out then as trans and instead identified as gay.

"I guess by the textbook I'm straight, but that term doesn't necessarily fit, either — it just feels weird to take that label," he says. "I just like the word gay, although queer is growing on me."

AS AN FTM — FEMALE TO MALE — TRANSGENDER individual, Sheffield says he understands some women are distressed to learn about women becoming men in a world where patriarchy still rules.

"The establishment has been labeled 'the man' and now we have 'women' wanting to become 'the man,' but in reality it's not that black and white," he says.

"I think people need to keep in mind, so I'm trans, but I can't hit the delete button that I grew up in a female body," he says.

"Certain experiences come with that … and they shape you as a person and you don't get rid of them. I'm not going to feel less passionate about the rights of women, pay equity, reproductive rights, because I'm trans."

Sheffield, who is in therapy, says he is taking his time with his complete transition that includes hormones and surgery — and a legal name change to James Parker Sheffield.

Sheffield says he is also patient with the process and is not rushing into anything. After not visiting a doctor in a decade, he is making sure he is physically fit for upcoming changes to his body. His brothers and sisters are supportive and he has a group of friends, several of whom are also transgender, who are helping him through the process of finding the right doctors and resources.

But making this decision, to become the man he knows he is, is still quite daunting and even scary, he acknowledges. Not only does he fear something might happen to him physically, but losing loved ones who are unable to deal with his transition is also painful.

"It can be incredibly hard to hear things that are not supportive from those you love, but it doesn't compare to the damage you do to yourself if you are unhappy," he says.

SOVOCALENDAR

A TWO-WEEK GLANCE AT ENTERTAINMENT & COMMUNITY EVENTS **SEPT. 3 - SEPT. 17, 2009**

Black Gay Pride, Sept. 3-7. See special calendar, Page 25

THURSDAY, SEPT. 3

Celia Rivenbark, author of award-winning bestsellers "Stop Dressing Your Six-Year-Old Like a Skank" and "We're Just Like You, Only Prettier," reads from her new book, "You Can't Drink All Day if You Don't Start in the Mornin'." 7:30 p.m., Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse, 991 Piedmont Ave., www.outwritebooks.com

The **International Friendship Conference** gets underway and runs through Sept. 7, bringing LGBT Asians and their friends from around the world to Atlanta for a long weekend of community-building and social events. Events will be held at the host hotel, the Georgia Tech Hotel & Conference Center, and various venues around Atlanta. www.ifcon.org

FRIDAY, SEPT. 4

The **Atlanta Peach Pride Bowl** begins and lasts through Sept. 6. Sixteen flag football teams from around the country are participating in this Gay Super Bowl IX primer; atlantapeachpridebowl.homestead.com, email AtlantaPeachPrideBowlVP@yahoo.com or AtlantaPeachPrideBowlVP@gmail.com

The **Decatur Book Festival** kicks off and continues through Sept. 6. Numerous gay authors are slated to appear. See story, page 29. www.decaturbookfestival.com

Dragon*Con opens and runs through Sept. 7 at three downtown hotels. Gay-specific programming includes "Missing Minority," a panel discussion at 1 p.m. on Friday that features out **Q100 DJ Melissa Carter** and questions whether there will be any openly gay characters in "Star Trek" films. The Rainbow Party on Saturday at 10 p.m. features DJ B-Naut. For a complete list of events, visit www.trektrak.com and dragoncon.org

Charis Books & More celebrates Black Gay Pride and the Decatur Book Festival with a huge meet-and-greet with lesbian authors **Radclyffe, Fiona Zedde, Skyy, JM Redmann, Z Egloff, Kim Baldwin, VK Powell, D Jackson Leigh** and **Jane Vollbrecht**. 8-9:30 p.m. at 1189 Euclid Ave., www.chariscircle.org

A transgender play and talk back, **"He/She & Me: A Love Story,"** opens at the Academy Theater and is performed again on Sept. 5 and then again Sept. 11-12. Shows are at 8 p.m. Tickets are $12. 119 Center St., Avondale Estates, 404-474-8332, www.academytheatre.org

"The Hottest Ticket in Town," the latest installment in the Drive-by Theater Project's stage series starring gay artist Paul Wolski, Stan Gentry and Timothy Gray. 9 p.m., Upstairs at Danneman's, 466 Edgewood Ave., www.dannemans.com

Aqua Fridays begin this week and will be every Friday with **DJ SugarCut**, 9 p.m., cover charge $7, Paris Decatur, 308H Ponce de Leon Place, www.parisdecatur.com

Martina Diamante brings **Glitterati** to Bellissima every

(Photo by [illegible])

FRIDAY, SEPT. 4
Britney Spears brings her "Circus" to Atlanta. 8 p.m. Phillips Arena, 1 Philips Drive, www.ticketmaster.com

SATURDAY, SEPT. 5

Diane Durrett performs at Eddie's Attic. 8 p.m., 515 N. Mcdonough St. # B, www.eddiesattic.com

(Photo via Myspace.com)

(File photo)

SPOTLIGHT EVENT

(Courtesy photo)

FRIDAY, OCT. 2 – SUNDAY, OCT. 4

The Georgia Women's Festival, set for Oct. 2-4, offers three days of camping and performances celebrating women in music, comedy the arts and more. **Vickie Blankenship** is among the performers and organizers. Roy's Hideaway Campground, 268 Catfish Lane, Collins, Ga. www.indiegrrl.com, www.royshideaway.com

UPCOMING

SATURDAY, SEPT. 19

The **Women's Outdoor Network** hosts its second annual **Best Ball Tournament** to benefit YouthPride and BreakThru House, a charity for women dealing with addiction. Registration 7:30 a.m., shotgun start 9 a.m. at Brown's Mill Golf Course, 480 Cleveland Ave. http://wonatlanta.com/golf/index.html

Boxerstock 2009 is an all-day music fest benefiting Atlanta Boxer Rescue. Several LGBT-inclusive bands scheduled to play. $10, noon to 10 p.m. at Dogma, 4790 Wright Drive, Smyrna. www.boxerstock.org

TUESDAY, SEPT. 22 – SUNDAY, SEPT. 27

The **Southern Comfort Conference**, one of the nation's top events for transgender people, features a packed slate of events including the 3rd annual transgender career expo on Sept. 25 and the Robert Eads Health Project. Crowne Plaza Hotel – Atlanta Perimeter at Ravinia, 4355 Ashford Dunwoody Road, www.sccatl.org

SATURDAY, SEPT. 26

MEGA Family Project hosts its first annual **Family Conference** with programs for LGBT parents, prospective parents and children with LGBT parents. 9 a.m. – 5 p.m at Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta, 1911 Cliff Valley Way. www.megafamilyproject.org

SUNDAY, SEPT. 27

Tickets are on sale now for a special **30th anniversary show of the Armorettes**. More than 40 Armorettes will be in attendance. General admission $15, at the door $20, limited seated tickets $20. Proceeds benefit those with HIV/AIDS. Buy tickets at Jungle, 2115 Faulkner Road and www.armorettes.com

The **Big Gay Supper Club** visits The **Original El Taco** for brunch. 12:30 p.m. at 1186 N. Highland Ave. $20 plus tax and tip. www.thebiggaysupperclub.com

SOVO.com

For more calendars and organization listings covering nightlife, entertainment, sports, spirituality and health.

www.myspace.com/bellissima _lounge

Chris Coleman and Caliber Enterprises bring **"Fresh"** to Nonna Mia every Friday. Featuring **Princess Charles** and the **Sophisticated Ladies** with Caliber models. 10:30 p.m., 980 Piedmont Ave. NE, (404) 532-2815, www.nonnamiaatlanta.com

Barry Brandon performs **"In My Own Words"** at Actor's Express as part of its After Dark series. With Veronica Brooks, Gigi Monroe and Jose Luis Rodriguez. Tickets are $20. 11 p.m., 887 W. Marietta St., Suite J-107, 404-607-SHOW, www.actors-express.com, www.barrybrandonmusic.com

SATURDAY, SEPT. 5

"Identity Crisis Panel Discussion — Educating Our Community" with transgender activist Tracee McDaniel of the Juxtaposed Center for Transformation will be from 1-4 p.m., Paris Decatur, 308H Ponce De Leon Pl., Decatur, 404-932-0737, email juxtaposedcenter@bellsouth.net

Special **Ed Hardy** party at Chaparral — everyone wearing Ed Hardy apparel gets in free before 11:30 p.m. with special Ed Hardy giveaways and drinks by the new Ed Hardy vodka. 2715 Buford Hwy., www.chaparralatlanta.com

SUNDAY, SEPT. 6

Griffin Productions brings **DJ Lydia Prim** to the Body Shop for a late night set from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. 2675 Johnson Road, www.myspace.com/bodyshopatlanta

Franklin Abbott will give a reading of his new poetry book, **"Pink Zinnia,"** as part of the Decatur Book Festival. 1:15 p.m. at the Holiday Inn (Decatur Conference Center Stage), 130 Clairemont Ave.; and at 3:15 p.m. with other local poets at Java Monkey, 205 E. Ponce de Leon Ave. www.decaturbookfest.org

A reunion for the **Sports Page**, the former lesbian bar, including quarter beers, the "Sports Page Shuffle" and surprise guests will be from 6:30-9 p.m. at Bellissima, 560-B Amsterdam Ave., 404-917-0220

MONDAY, SEPT. 7

Atlanta's Slow Food Potluck Picnic at Piedmont Park is part of a national campaign to support real food change in schools. Free, just bring your own picnic. Noon-3 p.m. Piedmont Park. Email info@ATLpicnic.com

Mixx Atlanta hosts a **Labor Day After Hours** party that starts at 12:01 a.m. on Monday with **DJ Martin Fry**. If you're still awake, there's a **Labor Day Cookout** starting at 6 p.m. on Monday. 1492 Piedmont Ave. NE #B, 404-228-4372, www.mixxatlanta.com

TUESDAY, SEPT. 8

Faiths & Feminisms Interfaith Book Circle, 7-8:30 p.m. Bring passages of your favorite books "that speak to your unique spiritual journey or have deepened your understanding of your commitment to feminism." At the home of Linda Bryant. Email for directions: linda@chariscircle.org.

"Chicago" opens at the Fox Theatre by Broadway Across America and runs through Sept. 13. 660 Peachtree St., www.foxtheatre.org

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 9

Exploring Genders Through Reading discusses Intersex & After (Journal of Lesbian & Gay Studies #15), edited by Iain Morland. 7-8:30 p.m., Charis Books & More, 1189 Euclid Ave., www.chariscircle.org

SUNDAY, SEPT. 6

Chris Coleman presents New York City's **DJ Sin Morera** from 6 p.m. to midnight at Tongue & Groove, 2420 Piedmont Road. www.chriscolemanenterprises.com

THURSDAY, SEPT. 10

"Paint the Town Pink," an Out & Equal Atlanta and American Cancer Society LGBT Breast Cancer fundraiser, will be from 6-10 p.m. at the Metropolis Pool and Club House in Midtown. www.outandequal.org

Charis Circle hosts **"Women, Hormones and Options"** from 7-9:30 p.m. at Emory Presbyterian Church, 1886 North Decatur Road. $25 pre-registration is required. www.chariscircle.org

Christabel and the Jons, a band based in East Tennessee that combines Appalachian mountain music with vintage swing, performs at Eyedrum. 8:30-11 p.m., Cover charge $7. 290 MLK Jr. Drive SE,

FRIDAY, SEPT. 11

Atlanta Pearl Day at Six Flags is Sept. 11, but several events are planned throughout the weekend. Artists to be featured at Six Flags include Kelly Rowland, Kristine W, Frenchie Davis and DJ Junior Vasquez. The Atlanta Pride Committee benefits. For a complete list of events, see story on Page 31 and visit www.pearlday.com

The **WNBA Atlanta Dream** play their last home game of the regular season, taking on the Connecticut Sun. First 3,000 fans receive 2009 Dream Team poster; autograph and meet-and-greet session on the court follows the game. 7 p.m. at Philips Arena, One Philips Drive. www.atlantadream.net

"Challenge the Culture of Fear: Letters for Shifa," an action to challenge Islamophobia and targeting of Muslim communities since 9-11, will be from 8-9:30 p.m. at Charis Books & More, 1189 Euclid Ave., 404-524-0304, www.charisbooksandmore.com

DJ Diablo Rojo crashes the turntables at Mary's for a special **'Do Ask, Do Tell'** edition of **Manshaft**. 1287 Glenwood Ave. 404-624-4411, www.marysatlanta.com

SATURDAY, SEPT. 12

Jealouse's Daring Divas perform every Saturday at 11 p.m. at Blake's on the Park, 227 10th St., www.blakesontheparkatlanta.com

Sabado Encendio every Saturday with Reggaeton, hip-hop and the best of Latin vibes. Chaparral, 2715 Buford Hwy., www.chaparralatlanta.com

SUNDAY, SEPT. 13

DJ Alyson Calagna spins at Opera as part of Atlanta's first Red Party (wear red!), Chris Coleman's birthday bash and the official closing party of the Pearl Day weekend. 6-11:55 p.m., 1150b Peachtree St., General admission $20, VIP admission $40, 404-277-4967, www.facebook.com/MelChesnut

TUESDAY, SEPT. 15

The **Big Gay Supper Club** visits **Agave**. Cocktails at 7 p.m., dinner at 8 p.m. at 242 Boulevard, SE. $35 plus tax and tip. www.thebiggaysupperclub.com

Gay Outreach at AID Atlanta hosts **"Bridging the Gap,"** a look at the diversity and segregation that exists in the LGBT community. There will be a discussion panel with representatives from many facets of the LGBT community. 7-9 p.m., Actor's Express, 887 W. Marietta St. Suite J107, 404870-7763, www.aidatlanta.org

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 16

Text your way to a date at **"The Hook Up"** — Atlanta's favorite way to flirt — every Wednesday at Blake's on the Park, 227 10th St. All night. blakesontheparkatlanta.com

THURSDAY, SEPT. 17-20

Hal Sparks of "Queer as Folk" fame performs at the Vortex Laughing Skull Lounge. 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. shows available. 878 Peachtree St., www.vortexcomedy.com

To add a listing: *E-mail calendar@sovo.com, call 404-876-1819, ext. 34, or fax 404-876-2709. attn: Calendar Editor. Entries should be submitted at least 14 days in advance of publication date.*

Outwrite Welcomes You to Labor Day Atlanta

OUTWRITE welcomes BLACK GAY PRIDE 2009 with 3 evenings of special events September 4th 5th and 6th

• Thu 9/3 @ 7:30pm Celia RIVENBARK reading/signing 'You Can't Drink All Day if You Don't Start in the Morning' St. Martins Press

• Friday 9/4 @ 7:30pm Dwayne VERNON 'Deception Lies & Truth' and Mike WARREN 'Sweet Swagger' @ 9:00pm T.D. FAISON '12.6: Blessing or a Curse'

• Saturday 9/5 @ 4:00pm G. Winston JAMES 'The Damaged Good' and Shawn Stewart RUFF 'Finlater' @ 5:30pm Nikki RASHAN 'Double Pleasure, Double Pain' @ 7:30pm Rodney LOFTON 'No More Tomorrow's' Strebor Books

• Sunday 9/6 @ 5:00pm 'Lovers & Friends Show' Season Two DVD Release Party @ 7:30pm Outwrite Tribute to E. Lynn HARRIS

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BRIDGING AND UNITING

Black Gay Pride brings community activists, party producers together for long weekend of empowerment

BLACK GAY PRIDE

By LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN

'Real Housewives' cast adds star power to nightlife, Page 23

By the book: Black Gay Pride literary events, Page 24

Black Gay Pride calendar, Page 25

In the Life Atlanta
Sept. 2-7
Full schedule of official Black Gay Pride Events
www.inthelifeatl.com

State of Black Gay America Summit
Sept. 5, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Georgia Ballroom, second floor
Renaissance Atlanta Hotel Downtown
590 West Peachtree St. NW
www.sbgasummit.org

Youth SpeakOUT 2009
Sept. 6, 1 p.m.
Renaissance Atlanta Hotel
mystory@pridetv.org

Above: Bishop **Yvette Flunder** is the keynote speaker for Saturday's State of Black Gay America Summit and for Sunday's Interfaith Service. (Photo courtesy City of Refuge) Inset: In the Life Atlanta works to offer 'powerful' and 'mind-broadening' events, according to **Raymond Duke**, board president. (Photo courtesy Duke)

IF ATLANTA IS THE GAY MECCA OF THE SOUTH, it is the black gay mecca of the nation.

From nightlife and social groups, to employment opportunities, organizations and a rich civil rights history, the city's reputation for welcoming LGBT people of color is earned every day of the year.

But at no time is it more deserved than Labor Day Weekend, when Atlanta plays host to what organizers describe as the largest Black Gay Pride celebration in the world.

For years, what would become known as Black Gay Pride was a loosely organized weekend of house parties and club events that drew attendees from around the nation.

In 1996, In the Life Atlanta formed to add a more formal educational and cultural component to the weekend.

This year, ITLA chose the theme "Bridging Gaps, Uniting Communities" for its full slate of activities, which range from workshops and a health fair to literary events, a youth track, a film fest, marketplace, fashion show and interfaith service.

"We need to offer our community some cultural aspects, so they're not just getting a party, they're not just getting nightlife — they are getting something wonderful and powerful," says Raymond Duke, ITLA board president.

For ITLA, healthy communities start with the health of the individuals who make them up. To that end, ITLA hosts a major Health Fare featuring more than $1,000 in free health screenings at its host hotel, the Grand Hyatt in Buckhead.

ITLA's packed weekend of official events also includes multiple workshops on Saturday and Sunday, on topics ranging from religion and spirituality to sex, transgender issues, kink, Ask the Doctor, tensions within the LGBT community, candidate training, nonprofits and fundraising, to name just a few.

"We want to broaden their minds and get their health checked out, because if we don't take care of our community, who will?" Duke says.

Other events offered by the non-profit, all-volunteer group include a VIP reception, opening ceremony, president's party, community luncheon, jazz brunch and pool parties.

Another highlight of ITLA's schedule is Sunday's Interfaith Service, led by Bishop Yvette Flunder, who is presiding bishop of Refuge Ministries/The Fellowship and founder of The City of Refuge Community Church UCC in San Francisco. An accomplished speaker, pastor and musician, she preaches a message of radical inclusivity.

IN THE LIFE ATLANTA ISN'T THE ONLY ORGANIZATION working to bring an empowering cultural component to Black Gay Pride weekend.

Since 2007, the State of Black Gay America Summit has brought together local and national leaders to reflect on where the community stands and where it is going.

The summit is spearheaded by Gregory Allen's Xtreme Entertainment. Allen co-chairs the summit with community organizer R. Darlene Hudson.

"The summit is an opportunity where leaders can come together with other leaders, and we also have community members and allies present, so we can put it all out there on the table," Hudson says.

"Black Gay Pride is known as a party spot, and I'm looking forward to those parties, so I'm not putting them down," she adds. "But it is important for people to come together, and we don't have many opportunities, outside of the world of HIV prevention, to have these discussions."

While the summit is not an ITLA event, the two groups find ways to cooperate and support each other's efforts. ITLA is providing hotel and airfare to bring Bishop Flunder to Atlanta to speak at its interfaith service; while in town, she is also giving the keynote address at the summit.

"This is a way we can be proactive for the whole community," Duke says.

Organizers expect 150 attendees for this year's summit, which focuses on the theme "Defining Our Agenda — Making Our Presence Known." It opens with an invocation by Rev. Dennis Meredith and a series of welcomes from city leaders and candidates. Following lunch and Flunder's address are two panel discussion featuring multiple community leaders.

The first panel, "Defining Our Agenda," includes Mandy Carter, Mary Anne Adams, Rev. Kenneth Samuel, Dr. George Smith, Dr. Paula Frew, Dr. Lawrence Bryant, Terrence McPhaul, Jasper Hendricks and Yolo Akili.

The second, "Making Our Presence Known," features Maurice Cook, Rev. Angela D. Davis, Craig Washington, Destiny Hill, Earl Fowlkes, Rodney Lofton, Nadine Smith, Kevin McNeir and Southern Voice and David Magazine's Ryan Lee. Pastor Troy Sanders serves as moderator.

After the panels, there will be a "call to action" to take the work of the summit out into the broader community. Hudson says she plans to develop a DVD and written document outlining the summit's conclusions to send to President Obama, the National Black Justice Coalition, and other national, state and local organizations.

The summit itself is free; tickets to the lunch and keynote speaker are $25. The event also continues to seek sponsors and donations through its website.

"This is partying with a purpose," Hudson says. "You can get your party on, but come and get something of substance to take back to your community."

IN ADDITION TO ITLA'S FULL SCHEDULE AND THE State of Black Gay America summit, other community-minded events scheduled during Black Gay Pride include a special youth summit on Sunday and several events offered in conjunction with Traxx Atlanta and Traxx Girls' "Pure Heat" weekend.

PrideTV.org and the Bayard Rustin-Barbara Jordan Leadership Project present Youth SpeakOUT 2009 on Sept. 5. The town hall forum will feature students and alumni from historically black colleges.

As with the State of Black Gay America Summit, BET News is expected to be on hand to film parts of the youth speak out, according to organizer Anare Holmes, executive producer for PrideTV.org.

The Pure Heat weekend includes two events in partnership with the Vision Community Foundation, both on Friday, Sept. 4. Free rapid results HIV testing is offered from noon to 4 p.m. at Pure Heat's host hotel, the Renaissance Marriott at 590 West Peachtree. There is also a feed the homeless initiative at the Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless, 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.

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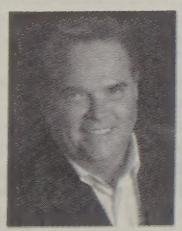

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ATLANTA'S FAMOUS 'HOUSEWIVES' STEP OUT

Stars of Bravo's hit reality TV show add sparkle to Black Gay Pride

Nene Leakes hosts blingunderwear.com underwear fashion show
Sept. 4, 10 p.m. at Jungle
2115 Faulkner Road NE
www.wassupnatl.com

'An Evening with Stylemaker Dwight Eubanks'
Sept. 5, 7 p.m. at Grand Hyatt Buckhead
3300 Peachtree Road NE.
www.inthelifeatl.com

The All White Party with V103's Miss Sophia and Sheree Whitfield
Sept. 7, 10 p.m. at Lava Lounge
57 13th St., www.pureheatatlanta.com

BLACK GAY PRIDE

NIGHTLIFE • By MATT SCHAFER

ALTHOUGH DWIGHT EUBANKS OF THE "REAL Housewives of Atlanta" is a native to the city with which he is now famously associated, this year will mark his first appearance at Black Gay Pride.

"My introduction was several years ago. I was dumbfounded. I thought there was one Pride, and I asked why all these people were coming into town and I found out there was Black Pride," Eubanks says.

Eubanks, who is openly gay on the Bravo reality TV show and is BFF with Nene Leakes, says the racy reputation he heard about Black Gay Pride kept him away. But as the weekend became more about community action and education he has become more involved. He will take questions from the public after In The Life Atlanta's "See Us in the Life" film fest on Sept. 6.

Eubanks founded the Purple Door Salon on Edgewood Avenue, and has been receiving increasing industry attention for his work. He's now deveoloping a reality series called "Behind the Purple Door," but was surprised at the interest in him that followed the inaugural season of "Real Housewives of Atlanta" last year.

"This was not what I was prepared for," Eubanks says. "I knew when everyone else knew that I was considered the 'sixth housewife,' that was just kind of sprung on me, and I was like, wow... When they introduced me on TV, they introduced me as Nene's gay boyfriend, and I was like, well, OK. I was surprised and shocked when they did that, but I'm OK with myself."

The show has given him one of the highest profiles of any black gay man in Atlanta, and he says he's comfortable with being the public face of openly gay black men.

"If they want to label me as the poster child, then so be it," he says. "Maybe I can inspire some kids, then that's OK. You're talking to someone who failed gym twice, so school was very difficult for me."

The son of a second-generation Pentecostal pastor, Eubanks came out early and it didn't go over well with his family.

"I had to see a psychologist, and I had to go to church and get it prayed out of it," he says. "My whole family was praying for me. It was very difficult for me. There was not a day that went by that did not involve some conversation about who I was and what was happening to me."

Had it not been for his grandmother and boyfriend, Eubanks says he might have chosen to end his life while still a teenager.

"My grandmother, who's still living and is 89 years old, is the one who broke the ground. She says, 'This is my grandson and I love him, and if you can't live with that he can come live with me,'" Eubanks says. "It was probably her, and my boyfriend — I was dating a much, much, much older man at the time — who kept my feet on the ground during all of that."

NOW EUBANKS WANTS TO USE THAT EXPERIENCE to help transform the culture that black gay men find themselves in. He's a proponent of public affection.

"If you want to hold a woman's hand, hold a woman's hand. If you want to hold a man's hand, hold a man's hand, do it," Eubanks says. "Some kind of way we have just closed up ourselves and our bodies."

He'd like to see one Pride celebration instead of two, and see more clubs and social gatherings where everyone is welcome.

"I don't understand why we would segregate ourselves off like that," Eubanks says. "I went out to a club and they said it was ladies night and they didn't want our faces, and they didn't want our dicks in there ... it was like a slap in the face. It's like, you are my sister and you don't want me to come in ... This was in Atlanta while we were filming [RHOA]."

Eubanks is also encouraging people to be more open and friendly with each other. He recently met former Xscape singer Kandi Burress this year and formed a tight bond with her family.

'Real Housewives of Atlanta' stars **Dwight Eubanks**, **Nene Leakes** and **Sheree Whitfield** are scheduled to make appearances at Black Gay Pride. (Photos courtesy Glenn Bean)

"We have dinner together once a month, and Kandi isn't always there," Eubanks says. "I didn't plan it that way, but I just fell in love with their energy, their wit, I just fell in love them. They are coming over to my place for dinner on Sunday, and I don't even know if Kandi is coming, but Aunt Bertha, Aunt Nora and her mother are."

Eubanks insists "Real Housewives of Atlanta" isn't staged, but says he has good relationship with all of the women.

"I like all of the girls. Sometimes it makes some of the girls angry that I like them all, but I do, I get along with all of them," he says.

He and Sheree Whitfield have had several successful business projects together, he says; he thinks Kim Zolciak is funny — and has a special place in his heart for Nene Leakes.

"Of course Nene is my girl. I don't agree with everything she does," Eubanks says. "I give her advice and she takes it sometimes, and sometimes she doesn't."

LEAKES IS HEADLINING HER OWN EVENT as she teams with Wassup N ATL to kick off Black Gay Pride in earnest at Jungle.

"I think our signature event is Friday at Jungle with Nene Leaks," Wassup N ATL owner Mario D. Harris II says. "She is going to host an underwear fashion show."

Male models will show off fashions from blingunderwear.com as the strut their stuff at nightclub.

"They have embedded underwear with stones, it's just very high end, sexy underwear," Harris says. "If you can't get laid in their underwear, you can't get laid."

The fashion show is one of 10 events Wassup N ATL is putting on over the weekend, including a trip to Philips Arena to see Britney Spears.

"We bought a section at the concert, so we're going to have a gay section and all be there together," Harris says.

As hard as Harris and the men are working, the women might be working harder. Traxx Girls and Traxx Atlanta will be put on 35 events over six day for Black Gay Pride, including parties, HIV testing and working with homeless.

"Oh my gosh, if this was [scored between] 1 through 10, this would be 100. It really is because this is when all of our partners come into town," says Avian Watson, spokesperson for Traxx Girls. "This is the biggest Black Gay Pride in the country, and I think it's just because of the amount of the events and the caliber of the events."

Traxx Girls are stepping up their game, bringing Lil' Kim to the Freight Depot, which is across from Atlanta Underground.

"This going to be the first time Lil' Kim is going to perform in front of an alternative crowd," Watson says.

Traxx Girls will close out the weekend with the White Party on Sept. 7 at the Lava Lounge with Miss Sophia from V-103 and another star of "Real Housewives of Atlanta" fame, Sheree Whitfield.

"Sheree will be hosting our White Party on Monday ... we thought we would get Kim too, but that would have been just a little too much drama," Watson says.

By the book

African-American authors come out for Black Gay Pride

BLACK GAY PRIDE
BOOKS • By MATT SCHAFER

OVER A DOZEN GAY AUTHORS WILL DESCEND ON Atlanta this Labor Day Weekend to discuss their books and remember the work of E. Lynn Harris, one of the giants in the gay literary field.

Harris, a fixture at Black Gay Pride and Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse, will be remembered throughout the weekend. The celebrated black gay author died in July. He will be included as part of an In the Life Atlanta candlelight vigil on Sept. 2 and a tribute on Sept. 6 at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse.

"He read here for every single book that he wrote," Outwrite owner Philip Rafshoon says. "He started out by selling his books out of the back of his car."

Excerpts from Lynn's work be read at Outwrite by a number of authors and fans, including Duncan Teague and Anthony Antoine of the spoken word group ADODI Muse; and authors Fiona Zedde, J.L. King and Laura Gilmore, Harris' publicist.

The Harris memorial will cap what promises to be one of the biggest weekends for Outwrite, where the store will host multiple Black Gay Pride events and also participate in the Decatur Book Festival.

IN THE LIFE ATLANTA ALSO CELEBRATES LYNN'S life on Sept. 2, and will honor him as part their Literary Café.

Raymond Duke, president of the group that organizes many events for Black Gay Pride, says ITLA events like the Literary Café offer readers a rare chance to connect with their favorite authors.

"It's very, very important to have the authors there as well as their books because various members of the community read these books, but they don't get a chance to meet the authors," he says.

Organizers chose 12 authors this year, including Skyy, Keith Montgomery, Cleon T. Bay III, Lamar Ariel, Laurinda D. Brown, D.J. Coleman, M. W. Moore and The Lesbian Goddess.

Lesbian author **Fiona Zedde** reads at both Outwrite Bookstore and Charis Books & More as part of Black Gay Pride weekend events. (Photo courtesy Zedde)

CHARIS BOOKS & MORE WILL JOIN WITH THE Atlanta Queer Literary Festival to offer a meet and greet with some of their best selling authors.

"It's an event that celebrates both Black Gay Pride and the Decatur Book Festival," says Sara Look, Charis co-owner. "It's going to be not a reading, but a place to go and meet some of your favorite authors."

Authors coming to Charis include Radclyffe, Fiona Zedde, Skyy, JM Redmann, Z. Egloff, Kim Baldwin, V.K. Powell, D. Jackson Leigh, and Jane Vollbrecht.

Readers can also take advantage of author appearances at the Decatur Book Festival and Dragon*Con. **(See stories, Page 27)**

FRIDAY, SEPT. 4

Mike Warren, Dwayne Vernon
7:30 p.m. at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse
www.outwritebooks.com

Author Meet and Greet
Charis Books & More, 1189 Euclid Ave. NE
Atlanta, GA 30307-1509, 404-524-0304
www.chariscircle.org

T.D. Faison
9 p.m. at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse
www.outwritebooks.com

SATURDAY, SEPT. 5

Black Gay Pride Literary Cafe
2:30 p.m. – 5 p.m. at Grand Hyatt Atlanta
3300 Peachtree Rd NE, www.inthelifeatl.com

G. Winston James, Shawn Stewart Ruff
4 p.m. at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse
www.outwritebooks.com

Nikki Rashan
5:30 p.m. at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse
www.outwritebooks.com

Rodney Lofton
7:30 p.m. at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse
www.outwritebooks.com

SUNDAY, SEPT. 6

The Lovers & Friends Show Season Two Release Party
5 p.m. at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse
www.outwritebooks.com

Tribute to E. Lynn Harris
7:30 p.m. at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse
www.outwritebooks.com

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BLACK GAY PRIDE EVENTS

Editors' note: In the Life Atlanta (ITLA) events held at Grand Atlanta Hyatt in Buckhead, 3300 Peachtree Road NE, 404-237-1234, unless otherwise noted.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 3

ITLA VIP Reception, invitation only. 7 p.m.

Traxx Girls Black Gay Pride opening party at My Sisters' Room. 10 p.m., 1271 Glenwood Ave., www.traxxgirls.com

DJs Fire and Deb spin eclectic grooves at The Studio at 10 p.m., $3 cover charge. 860 Hank Aaron Drive, email africanlove77@hotmail.com

Girls in the Night **Femme-nom-ennon** presents its annual trip to the Strip Club, an official event of Fever, featuring Lil Magic and the Girls. Doors open at 10 p.m. 241 Forsyth St., 404-604-8807, www.girlsinthenight.com

FRIDAY, SEPT. 4

ITLA Black Gay Pride Marketplace, 10 a.m.

In the Life Atlanta holds an **opening ceremony for Black Gay Pride**. Cash bar and door prizes. Includes performance by Anye Elite. 7-9 p.m. Followed by the **President's Pride Party** from 9 p.m.-2 a.m. with live DJ; cost is $10. Grand ballroom of the Grand Hyatt Atlanta in Buckhead, 3300 Peachtree Road NE, 404-237-1234, www.inthelifeatl.com

Charis Books & More celebrates Black Gay Pride and the Decatur Book Festival with a meet-and-greet with lesbian authors **Radclyffe, Fiona Zedde, Skyy, JM Redmann, Z Egloff, Kim Baldwin, VK Powell, D Jackson Leigh** and **Jane Vollbrecht**. 8-9:30 p.m. at 1189 Euclid Ave., www.chariscircle.org

Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse hosts readings by authors **Mike Warren** and **Dwayne Vernon**, 7:30 p.m. at 991 Piedmont Ave. www.outwritebooks.com

ITLA Youth Tract presents **"Come Play Wit Us"** skate party at Metro Lanes & Games promotes HIV awareness. 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. 1950 Metropolitan Parkway, 404-765-9065

ITLA and **Traxx Atlanta** present the third annual **Fire & Desire Mini Ball**. Doors open at 9 p.m., ball starts at 10 p.m. Tables $30 in advance, $40 at the door. Grand ballroom of the Grand Hyatt Atlanta. www.inthelifeatl.com

ITLA **SpeakFire**, 11:59 p.m.

Traxx Girls and **Traxx Atlanta** with **Angie Stone**, 10 p.m. – 2:30 a.m. at 595 North, 595 North Ave. www.pureheatatlanta.com

Wassup N ATL presents the **City Gym Boys**, 10 p.m. – 3 a.m. Jungle 2115 Faulkner Road NE, www.wassupnatl.com

Traxx Girls presents **Angel Lola Luv** hosting the MC Battle with Rich Kids. 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. at Club Miami, 3011 Buford Highway, www.pureheatatlanta.com

Nene Leakes of "The Real Housewives of Atlanta" hosts **Wassup N ATL**'s Blingunderwear.com fashion show at Jungle, 2115 Faulkner Road. For a full schedule of Wassupnatl events throughout the weekend, visit www.atlantaprideformen.com

Girls in the Night and the women of Foreplay Fridays present the **Black Affair**, or Luna Negra 2009. 10 p.m., Vita in Buckhead, 2110 Peachtree St., www.girlsinthenight.com

SATURDAY, SEPT. 5

ITLA Black Pride Marketplace, 10 a.m.
ITLA Health Expo, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
ITLA Workshops, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
ITLA Barber and Beauty Salon, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
For full schedule, visit www.inthelifeatl.com

State of Black Gay America Summit, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m., Georgia Ballroom, second floor, Renaissance Atlanta Hotel Downtown, 590 West Peachtree St. NW, sbgasummit.org

ITLA Community Luncheon, 12 – 1:30 p.m.

ITLA Young Adult Mini Conference, 1 – 4 p.m.

ITLA Literary Café, 2:30 -5 p.m.
See story on Page 24.

ITLA **"See Us in the Life"** film festival, 2:30 – 6:30 p.m. Tickets are $10. Azalea Room of the Grand Hyatt Atlanta in Buckhead, 3300 Peachtree Road NE, 404-237-1234, www.inthelifeatl.com

Wassup N ATL pool party. 4-7 p.m., Grand Hyatt Atlanta in Buckhead, 3300 Peachtree Road NE, 404-237-1234, www.inthelifeatl.com

Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse hosts readings by **G. Winston James** and **Sean Stewart Ruff**, 4 p.m.; **Nikki Rashan**, 5:30 p.m.; and **Rodney Lofton**, 7:30 p.m. 991 Piedmont Ave. www.outwritebooks.com

"An Evening with Stylemaker Dwight Eubanks," from "The Real Housewives of Atlanta," follows ITLA's "See Us in the Life" film fest. 7 p.m. at Grand Hyatt Buckhead.

ITLA **"Back Down Memory Lane"** Variety Show, 8:30 p.m.

Traxx Girls hosts **ATL Wet** with DJ Battle; hosted by Cassie and The Glen Twins. 3 - 8:30 p.m. at Primal.

Wassup N ATL presents **Liv Saturdays** 10 p.m.- 3 a.m. Vita, 2110 Peachtree Road NW, www.wassupnatl.com

Wassup N ATL presents **Magnum Saturdays** 10 p.m- 3 a.m. at Club 708, 708 Spring St., www.wassupnatl.com

Traxx Girls Big Bang Event with **Lil Kim**, 11 p.m.-6 a.m., Freight Depot (outside Johnny Rockets at Underground Atlanta), and Lil Kim will appear at **Traxx** also, sometime between 11 p.m.-6 p.m., www.traxxatlatna.com

SUNDAY, SEPT. 6

ITLA Black Pride Marketplace, 10 a.m.
ITLA Workshops, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Candidate & Campaign training with Georgia Equality and the Gay & Lesbian Leadership Institute. 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. at Grand Hyatt Atlanta in Buckhead, 3300 Peachtree Road NE, 404- 523-3070, georgiaequality.org

ITLA Jazz Brunch, 11 a.m.

Youth SpeakOUT 2009 features students and alumni from historically black colleges and universities. 1 p.m. at Renaissance Atlanta Hotel mystory@pridetv.org

Brushstrokes hosts a DVD signing with director **Roger Omeus Jr.** and stars **Derrick Briggs** and **Eugene Turner** of **"Finding Me,"** a film about a young black gay man's struggle to find his place in the world. 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at 1510 Piedmont Ave. www.brushstrokesatlanta.com

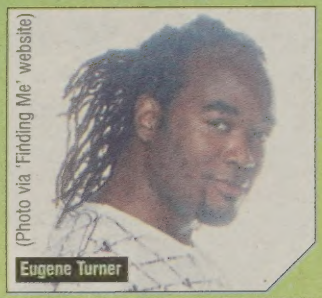
ITLA Interfaith Service featuring Bishop Yvette Flunder of City of Refuge, 2:30 – 4:30 p.m.

ITLA Sunday in the Park, 2 - 8 p.m., Piedmont Park, exact location TBA. Free, inthelifeatl.com

ITLA "Under 25 Pool Party," 3 – 6 p.m.

The final tour of **"Walk Like A Man — The Play"** returns to Atlanta at 3 p.m. at the Ivy Theatre on Avondale. All seats $20. www.eventbrite.com

Grown and Sexy with Wassup N ATL at Djangos, 7 p.m., 495 Peachtree St. NE, www.wassupnatl.com



Traxx and Friends Reunion and **Old Skool House Party**: 8 pm. at Club Miami. www.traxxatlanta.com

ITLA Fashion Show, 8 – 10 p.m.

The Lion's Den hosts **Keri Hilson** and others, 9 p.m.-4 a.m., Atlanta Peach Ballroom Nightclub, 3365 Buford Hwy. NE, atlpeachballroom.com, thelionsdenatlanta.moonfruit.com

Traxx Girls presents Showtime with **V103 Miss Sophia** and **Keri Hilson**, 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. at Atlanta Live, aka Dreamz, 3595 Clairmont Road. www.traxxgirls.com

Ladies at Play presents its 7th annual dance party for Black Gay Pride. 9 p.m., French American Brasserie, 30 Ivan Allen Jr. Blvd., www.ladiesatplay.com

MONDAY, SEPT. 7

ITLA **Weekend Wind Down Pool Party**, 1 – 5 p.m.

MTV star **Aneesa** will be on hand for a rooftop pool party for Pureheat. 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Renaissance Hotel, 590 W. Peachtree. www.pureheatatlanta.com

The **All White Party** features V103's **Miss Sophia** and **Sheree** of the "Real Housewives of Atlanta." 10 p.m. to 3 a.m. at Lava Lounge, 57 13th St. www.pureheatatlanta.com

Wassup N ATL presents **Privy Monday**. 10 p.m.-3 a.m. Sidebar, 79 Poplar St. NW # A. www.wassupnatl.com

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LGBT Track

Sept. 5, 1:45 – 2:30 p.m.
Decatur Conference Center Stage
Three Debut Novels: Readings from Shawn Stewart Ruff ("Finlater"), Collin Kelley ("Conquering Venus") and Z Egloff ("Verge")

Sept. 5, 3-3:45 p.m.
Decatur Library Stage
Bold Strokes: Readings from Radclyffe, Kim Baldwin and J.M. Redmann from lesbian fiction publisher Bold Strokes Books

Sept. 6, 1:15 – 2 p.m.
Decatur Conference Center Stage
New Musings from Old Friends: Atlanta poets Franklin Abbott and Sharon Sanders

Sept. 6, 3:45 – 4:30 p.m.
Decatur Conference Center Stage
BlazeVOX Attitude: Readings from Megan Volpert and Amy King, each with two books on BlazeVOX Books

Other appearances by LGBT authors

Sept. 5, 10 – 10:45 a.m.
City Hall Stage
Reading by Atlanta authors Jim Grimsley and Amanda Gable read from their new fiction

Sept. 5, 5:30 p.m. – 6:15 p.m.
City Hall Stage
A Sultry Afternoon: This 18-and-over reading includes lesbian writers Fiona Zedde and Skye, along with romantic suspense writer Selena Montgomery, a.k.a. Georgia State Rep. Stacey Abrams.

Sept. 6, 2:30 – 3:15 p.m.
City Hall Stage
God, Sex and Coming of Age: Gay authors Robert Leleux ("The Memoirs of a Beautiful Boy") and James Hannaham ("God Says No") join Carlene Bauer ("Not that Kind of Girl") to discuss writing dealing with religion and identity

LGBT authors join Decatur fest

THE TAGLINE FOR THIS YEAR'S DECATUR BOOK Festival is "King of all book festivals," but with the number of LGBT writers scheduled to appear, calling it the queen of all book fests would be appropriate as well.

The three-day festival features a special LGBT track, sponsored by the Atlanta Queer Literary Festival, which also holds its own festival Nov. 4-7. The track is divided into four group readings, featuring a total of 10 writers, including many familiar names.

"The Decatur Book Festival approached us about inviting authors and setting up the track, and we worked with the folks at Charis Books to get that done," says Franklin Abbott, an organizer of the Queer Literary Festival.

Celebrated gay author Felice Picano was originally scheduled to attend as part of the track. He is no longer coming, but organizers are excited about the remaining line-up.

"Our original star, Felice Picano, had to cancel for personal reasons, but we have some outstanding young talent that is going to be there," Abbott says.

That talent includes Abbott, who will read from his new poetry collection "Pink Zinnias," and fellow Queer Literary Festival organizer Collin Kelley, who will read from his new novel, "Conquering Venus."

Lesbian and gay authors are also well-represented outside of the official LGBT track.

As the festival officially opens Friday night, best-selling black gay author E. Lynn Harris will be remembered with a tribute prior to the keynote address by Sir Harold Evans. Harris' 11 novels explored sexual orientation, race and other issues in an entertaining way that drew both gay and non-gay readers. The part-time Atlanta resident died July 23 at age 54.

On Saturday, the festival's Atlanta Track features a joint reading by award-winning gay author Jim Grimsley and lesbian feminist writer Amanda Gables, who recently released her debut novel, "The Confederate General Rides North."

Saturday afternoon turns "sultry" with readings from lesbian authors Fiona Zedde and Skye, along with state Rep. Stacey Abrams, who writes romantic suspense fiction under the pen name Selena Montgomery.

Finally, on Sunday, issues of sexuality and religion converge for the discussion "God, Sex and Coming of Age," which includes two gay writers on its panel.

– Laura Douglas-Brown

In addition to a robust schedule of LGBT writers appearing throughout the weekend, the Decatur Book Festival opens Friday night with a tribute to black gay author **E. Lynn Harris**, who died in July. Harris is also being remembered at Black Gay Pride events this weekend; **see story on Page 24**. (File photo)

Dragon*Con panel discusses dearth of gays in 'Star Trek'

SOME OF THE BIGGEST NAMES OF the biggest sci-fi franchises are coming to Dragon*Con for Labor Day weekend, bringing 35,000 of their closest friends.

For the first time in Con history the actors who portrayed "Star Trek" icons Kirk, Spock, Picard and over a dozen of their crew members will appear at Dragon*Con. The largest science-fiction and fantasy convention in the South, it offers more than 3,500 hours of programming from Friday to Monday.

"This is the first time William Shatner has ever been to Dragon*Con," says Eric Watts, director of Dragon*Con's TrekTrak program that features "Star Trek" actors, writers, directors and the Miss Klingon Beauty Pageant.

Watts is the only openly gay program director at Dragon*Con, and has taken it upon himself to provide gay-themed programming.

"There is an extremely large GLBT community there, and I think there actually should be a track of programming here," Watts said. "There isn't one, so I've created some GLBT events in my track."

At 4 p.m. Friday, Watts will host "The Missing Minority," a panel discussion about the lack of gays in the "Star Trek" universe with gay writers Steve Berman and Carlos Pedraza; lesbian radio personality Melissa Carter; and Alan Siler, one of the organizers of OutLantaCon, a convention in Atlanta that caters to gay fans.

"The missing minority is something that I have included in my panels for all my years at Dragon*Con," Watts said. "The panel in the broadest sense is discussing why there might not be gay characters on 'Star Trek' or who might be gay. This year we are going to talk about why there aren't any gay characters in J.J. Abrams' new vision of the franchise."

OutLantaCon will also host the annual Rainbow Flag Party, starting at 10 p.m. on Saturday night.

Unlike last year when George Takei attended, there are no big name gay stars at this convention. Alessandro Juliani, who played the first openly gay man in American sci-fi on "Battlestar Galactica" earlier this year, will attend.

– Matt Schafer

Out Q100 DJ and sci-fi fan **Melissa Carter** joins a panel discussion on gays as Star Trek's 'missing minority.' (Courtesy photo)

Dragon*Con
Sept. 4 – Sept. 7
Hyatt Regency Atlanta
and other downtown hotels
www.dragoncon.org

'The Missing Minority'
Sept. 4, 4 p.m.
Sheraton Atlanta Hotel
165 Courtland St. NE

The Rainbow Flag Party
Sept. 5, 10 p.m.
Sheraton Atlanta Hotel

One-act play explores being married to trans spouse

A PLAY OPENING THIS WEEKEND TAKES A LOOK at the experience of a woman married to a man who transitions to a woman, and how learning to live with a transgender spouse examines the meaning of love, according to the director.

"He/She & Me: A Love Story" opens Friday at The Academy Theatre in Avondale Estates. It will be performed again on Sept. 5 and then again Sept. 11-12. It tells the story of Pat, who learns her husband of 35 years, Sam, is going to live the rest of his life as a woman. A Q&A will follow each performance.

The one-act, 40-minute play was written by Sharon Mathis, a local psychologist who has experience working with transgender clients and interviewed spouses of transgender people for background for the play. Mathis also stars in the one-woman show as Pat, as she expresses her experiences of being married to Sam as he transitions into Sheila.

"Even though this play is set in a transgender framework, it addresses universal issues," says Robert Drake, the director. "Questions it raises are, 'Where does the soul live?' 'What is a soul mate?' 'What is love?' And what do all these mean?"

One scene includes Pat going shopping with Sheila and enjoying picking out clothes and accessories. "But then she realizes this girl is her husband," Drake says.

"A very small percentage of people think they were born the wrong sex, but now we've come to a time where medical and technology can change this," Drake says.

Psychologically and emotionally, however, loved ones and society need time to accept these changes, he says.

"We've made Sheila and Pat so that the audience can see them as real people," Drake says. "It takes people longer to catch up — this play can be a useful piece to educate, to show there's no evil here."

– Dyana Bagby

09.04-05, 09.11-12

'He/She & Me: A Love Story'
Sept. 4-5, Sept. 11-12
8 p.m., $12
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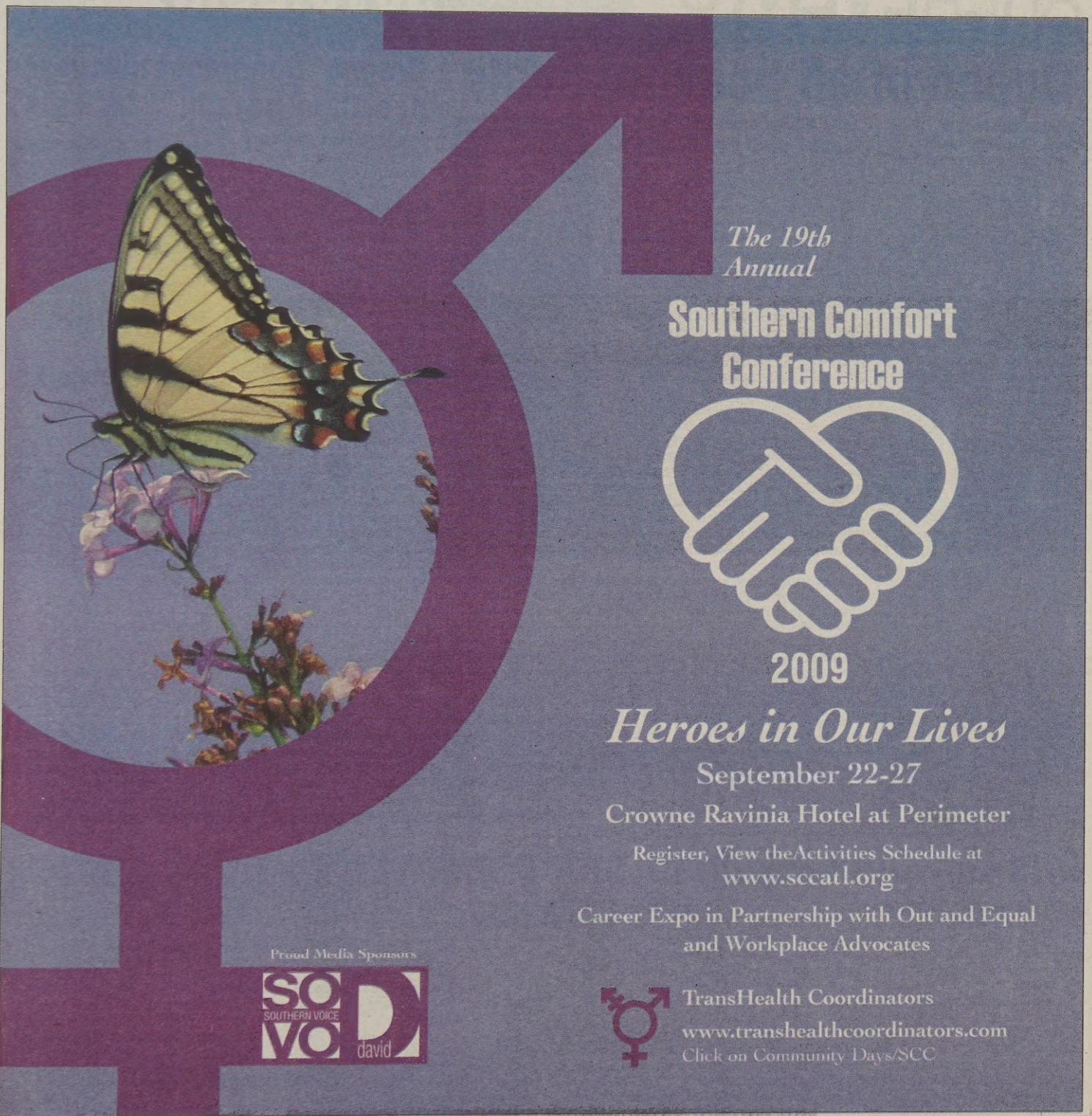
www.academytheatre.org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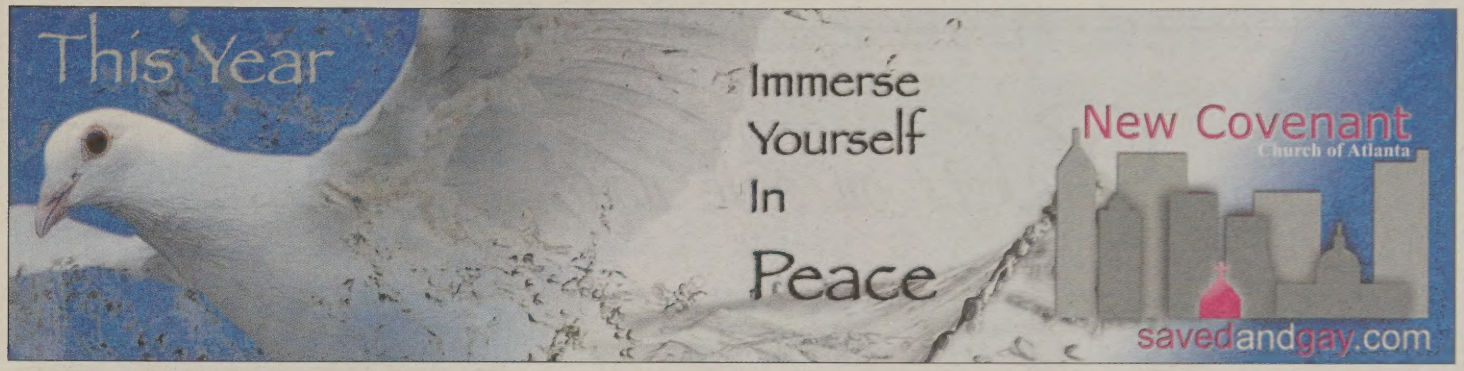

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– Rafer Johnson
Friend of Pride since 2004

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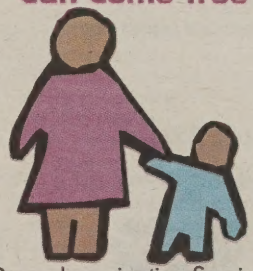

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For more information and to purchase tickets, go to **www.thehealthinitiative.org**, or call us at 404.688.2524

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Tickets are only $25 each and only a limited number will be sold, so purchase your chance to win a scooter today!
You need not be present to win. For more information, go to **www.thehealthinitiative.org/gardenparty2009/raffle.php**

Gay 'Pearl Day' takes over Six Flags

Exclusive night at theme park highlights weekend of events

EVENTS

BY LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN

PEARL DAY RETURNS TO SIX FLAGS OVER GEORGIA on Sept. 11 as a much larger, more organized event that is officially recognized for the first time by the Atlanta amusement park.

"Things are going about a million miles an hour," says Chip O'Kelley, vice president of Atlanta Pearl Day Committee, Inc., laughing about the pace of planning in the final days leading up to the weekend.

"This is the first time that Pearl Day has been an official event at Six Flags, and the talent is absolutely amazing," he says. "We have a stellar line-up, and there are so many things to be excited about."

In the past, Pearl Day was a loosely organized effort where participants purchased plastic pearls to benefit HIV organizations then wore them to visit Six Flags on a designated summer day. Pearl Day attendees mingled in the general park crowd, and there were no major events in the park devoted to them.

Pearl Day was not held in 2008, then re-emerged this year as an all-new event put on Atlanta Pearl Day Committee, Inc. The company is not a non-profit, but has guaranteed that the Atlanta Pride Committee will receive a minimum donation of $5,000, jumping to $10,000 if there are 10,000 attendees and $15,000 if there are 15,000 attendees.

Two other beneficiaries, CHRIS Kids and Pets Are Loving Support, will receive donations based on a similar structure, O'Kelley said.

Ten days out from the event, he said he feels "safe and secure" estimating attendance of at least 3,000, "but I wouldn't be surprised if we blew that out."

FOR THE FIRST TIME, SIX FLAGS HAS EMBRACED the "gay day" and helped with the full slate of entertainment that will greet Pearl Day guests from 5 p.m. on Sept. 11 until closing.

Pearl Day organizers will run buses from their host hotel, the W Midtown, and Blake's on the Park to Six Flags for attendees who don't want to drive.

Once there, Pearl Day patrons will have the park to themselves, and in a departure from usual Six Flags rules, alcohol will be served in some areas.

"We'll have the park exclusively for us and our friends to come and celebrate together, and people can be themselves and have fun and not be standing next to some church group in line," O'Kelley says.

DJ Bill Berdeaux will spin at the front of Six Flags throughout Pearl Day, DJ Greg Anderson will spin near the Crystal Pistol, and the Peachtree Pavilion will have DJ Power Infiniti at 6 p.m. and Junior Vasquez at 9 p.m.

Six Flags' Southern Star Amphitheatre features Niki Jane at 8 p.m., Kristine W at 9 p.m. and Kelly Rowland at 10 p.m.

A second stage outside the Drive In opens and closes with DJ Rob Reum, and includes Paris Bennett at 9 p.m, Nina Flowers at 8:30 p.m., Syesha Maarcado at 9:30 p.m. and Frenchie Davis at 10:30 p.m.

Local and regional drag personalities, including Alexandria Martin and Charlie Brown, will also appear on both stages. Martin is organizing the drag show that takes place at the Crystal Pistol.

Kendell Kelton, manager of public relations and communications for Six Flags Over Georgia and Six Flags White Water, says the amusement park reached out to Pearl Day last year and is happy to work with the group, as it does with numerous charities, private companies and other organizations every year.

"It's a great opportunity, especially with the entertainment package that is involved," Kelton says. "Junior Vasquez, Kristine W, Kelly Rowland — Hello, it's Kelly Rowland! I had her poster on my wall when I was in high school and she was with Destiny's Child. Everyone loves her."

Performers for Pearl Day Weekend include **Kelly Rowland**. (Publicity photo via Rowland)

BUT PEARL DAY DOESN'T END WHEN SIX FLAGS closes at midnight. The celebration continues immediately with a late-night After Party at Jungle, then picks up again on Saturday with "Cox-Tails By the Park," drinks with DJ Chris Cox at Blake's On the Park; special tickets to the Pet Shop Boys at Chastain; and Cox spinning at Jungle from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m.

Sunday's events include a brunch at Altitude at the W Midtown, which includes an underwear fashion show, then a Closing Party T-Dance with DJ Alyson Calagna at Opera, presented by Chris Coleman Enterprises.

Pearl Day theme park tickets purchased through the Six Flags website or at the door are $35 in advance and $40 on the day of the event; enter code pearl19.

Special VIP and Super VIP tickets are available for $100 and $150 on the Pearl Day website and include tickets to all Pearl Day Weekend events except the Pet Shop Boys. A Pearl VIP ticket for $350 includes that show as well as other privileges.

Tickets for individual events and other packages, plus more details, are on the Pearl Day website.

Pearl Day Weekend
Sept. 10-13
www.pearlday.com

THURSDAY, SEPT. 10
Pearl Day Kick Off Party
9 p.m. at W Hotel at Whiskey Park
Includes fashion show and special guests

FRIDAY, SEPT. 11
Early afternoon Cocktails
Blake's on the Park

Pearl Day 19: 'Resurrection'
5 p.m. – 12 a.m.
Six Flags Over Georgia

After Party
DJ Kide Madonny at Jungle

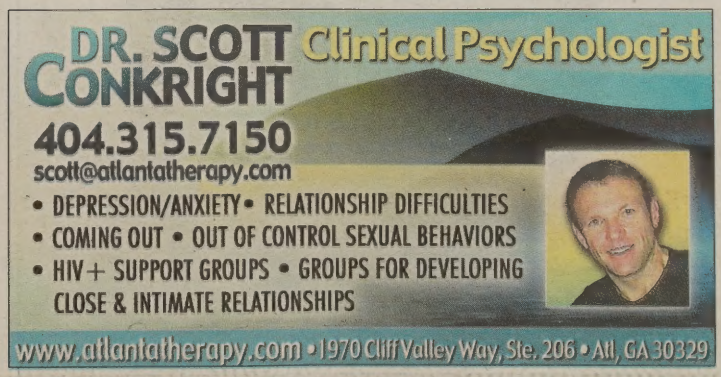
SATURDAY, SEPT. 12
'Cox-Tails By the Park' with DJ Chris Cox
4 p.m. at Blake's on the Park

Pet Shop Boys
8 p.m. at Chastain Park Amphitheater
www.ticketmaster.com
** Special $87 ticket includes Pearl Day and pre-party at Chastain, free drink, and admission to DJ Chris Cox at Jungle*

Saturday Night Bash With DJ Chris Cox
10 p.m. – 3 a.m. at Jungle

SUNDAY, SEPT. 13
Sunday Brunch and Social
Time TBA at Altitude at W Midtown Hotel

Pearl Day Closing Party T-Dance With DJ Alyson Calagna
6 p.m. – 12 a.m. at Opera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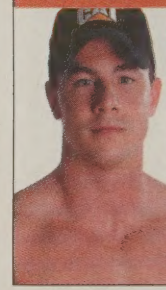

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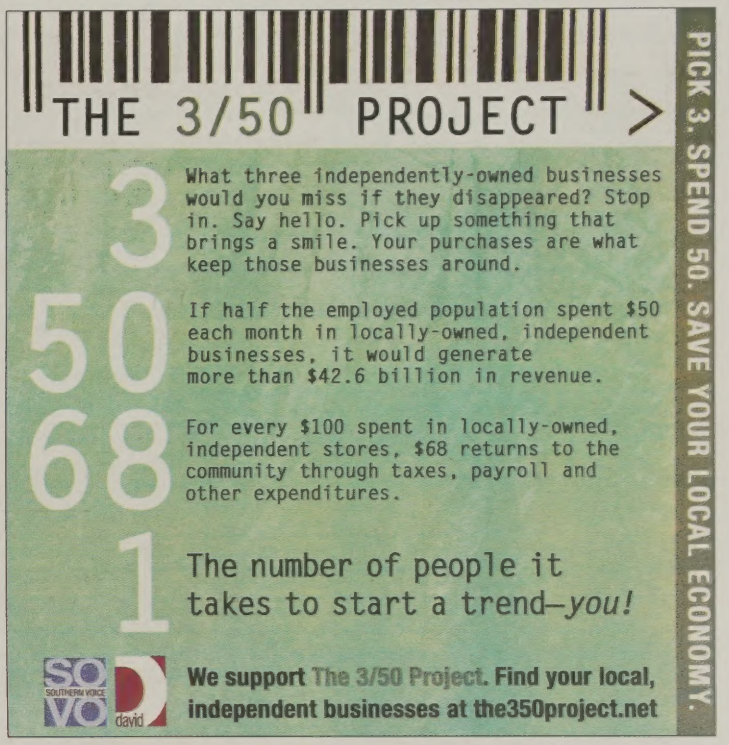
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Our KING too

Gay Atlantans start MLK holiday early with community, nightlife events. Page 8

PREMIERE PARTY: ATL event heralds beginning of the end of 'The L Word.' Page 23

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LAST CHANCE: Renewed push for a gay appointee in Obama's Cabinet. Page 10

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SOUTHERN VOICE

JAN. 9 - JAN. 15, 2009

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Artist and professor **Robert Sherer** pays students in blood. **Page 19**

Photo by AP

"We're getting there. I think we'll all be glad when there's no special interest in that restroom."

***Patrick Hogan**, spokesperson for the Minneapolis St. Paul International Airport, on waning tourist interest in the men's restroom stall where Sen. Larry Craig (R-Idaho) was arrested for soliciting a male undercover cop for sex. Hogan noted that the airport declined an offer to buy the stall for $5,000. (Associated Press, Dec. 28)*

on the record

"This is a testament to how fair-minded Portlanders are that it wasn't an issue. I spend my time on the basic issues of life. A part of that includes equal rights, but that's not even close to a majority of the time."

Sam Adams, who was sworn in Jan. 1 as the mayor of Portland, Ore., as his partner looked on. Portland is now the largest city in the United States to have an openly gay mayor. (Associated Press, Jan. 2)

"In 2006, when then-Sen. Obama voted against the Federal Marriage Amendment, he said, 'Decisions about marriage should be left to the states.' He was right then; and as I have come to realize, he is right now in concluding that DOMA has to go. If one truly believes in federalism and the primacy of state government over the federal, DOMA is simply incompatible with those notions."

*Georgian **Bob Barr**, a former Libertarian presidential candidate and former Republican congressman, in an op-ed column published this week in the Los Angeles Times. (Los Angeles Times, Jan. 5)*

"Look seans an old friend of mine and i didnt buy his performance at all-thought he did an average pretend acting like he was gay besides hes one of the most homophobic people i kno"

*Actor **Mickey Rourke**, an expected Oscar contender for "The Wrestler," in a private text message apparently trashing potential Oscar rival Sean Penn's performance in "Milk," the biopic of slain gay politician Harvey Milk. The Daily Beast, an entertainment website, claims to have been shown the text by "a Los Angeles entertainment honcho." (TheDailyBeast.com, Dec. 29)*

"There is no Oscar feud between Mickey and Sean. They have known each other and been friends for a very long time. Mickey attended the New York premiere of Milk to support Sean and only has the greatest respect for him."

Rourke's publicist, who told the Daily Beast that Rourke was "completely unaware of the text." (TheDailyBeast.com, Dec. 29)

Bob Barr (Photo by AP)

Mickey Rourke as 'The Wrestler' (Photo by Niko Tavernese/Fox Searchlight)

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Anthony Sanzio, spokesperson for Campbell Soup, refusing to bow to criticism from the conservative American Family Association over an ad placed in the Advocate, a gay news magazine. The ad, for Campbell's Swanson broth, featured a lesbian couple and their son. (Advertising Age, Dec. 22)

"I must admit I have a dressing room curiosity over Beckham. I want to see if he is equipped as he is in the Armani underwear adverts."

Marco Borriello, a striker for the AC Milan soccer team, on his interest in sneaking a peek at certain parts of soccer star David Beckham, who is on loan to the Italian team from the LA Galaxy. (The Sun, Dec. 17)

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AP Associated Press

Budget woes likely to trump social issues in '09 session

Gay rights advocates focus on HIV funding, anti-bullying bill

By MATT SCHAFER
mschafer@sovo.com

Splitting a shrinking pot of state revenue will likely dominate the Georgia General Assembly's 2009 legislative session, and gay advocates hope to avoid cuts to HIV-related services where they can and make sure cuts are proportional where they cannot.

A number of Atlanta-area lawmakers expect cutting an anticipated $2 billion from Georgia's $20 billion budget and likely constitutional amendments addressing trauma funding and transportation to dominate the session, which gets underway Jan. 12.

"The budget will be more a focus this year than in any other legislative session that I have been a participant in," Rep. Mike Jacobs (R-Atlanta) said.

Jeff Graham, executive director of Georgia Equality, the state's largest gay political group, said one HIV-related program already slated for cuts is the AIDS Drug Assistance Program, which provides funding of last resort to help pay for HIV medications.

"I don't believe that there are any programs that will avoid scrutiny and the ADAP program is one where the cuts have already been proposed by the Department of Human resources," Graham said.

Graham said 120 to 130 subscribers to ADAP could face interruptions in their service if the cuts go through.

"I think Democrats' job in the budget is to make sure that difficult times in the budget are not unfairly visited upon the most vulnerable people," said House Minority Whip Rep. Rob Teilhet (D-Smyrna).

"We don't want the budget balanced on the backs of children and low income people, people who are in need. That's going to be the natural reaction of the majority, if you need to cut $2 billion, just cut it out of education and health care and call it day."

Last year's budget battle dragged on far into the session, exacerbated by friction among Republican leaders. Rep. Karla Drenner (D-Avondale Estates) expects a similar fight in 2009.

"I look for the same sort of long drawn out bullshit that we went through last year," Drenner said. "Nothing healed that rift between [Lt. Gov. Casey] Cagle and [Speaker of the House Glenn] Richardson; that friction is still there."

GUARDING GAY ADOPTION

With the anticipated battle over the budget and without major state-level elections on the ballot in 2009, many legislators believe bills dealing with social issues like gay adoption could have a hard time moving forward.

But Drenner, the first and only openly gay member of the state legislature, said gay rights advocates can't let down their guard.

"I think that you never know, and if you believe that there won't be any opportunities for that, it is short sighted," she said. "There are other conservative members where the intention might not be to ban adoption, but there's always people like [Rep.] James Mills (R-Gainesville), or one of the pastors, who might use that as a vehicle."

In the 2007-2008 session, there was one adoption bill filed; it was not aimed toward gays. At the time, House Rules Committee Chairman Rep. Earl Ehrhart (R-Powder Springs) said he had no desire to allow an adoption bill out of his committee because of the various privacy issues that could be tacked on to any adoption legislation.

Still, Rep. Kathy Ashe (D-West Midtown) said it is entirely possible that the Republican leadership will support a social bill as way to distract the state during the budget crisis.

"In times like a bad economy, I always worry that people seek diversions to keep us distracted from the real issues, and sometimes those are social issues, be they abortion bans, or be they adoption bans," Ashe said.

Teilhet said there is concern of a bill coming that could feed into the 2010 race for governor.

State Rep. **Karla Drenner**, the only openly gay member of the General Assembly, said she remains worried that lawmakers could attempt to ban gay people from adopting children. (Photo by R.O. Youngblood)

"I've been trying to figure out what the next wedge is going to be, there is usually one per election cycle, one or two, and I don't know what the next one will be," Teilhet said. "There will be some death penalty things as a result of the Brian Nichols case, but I've not heard of anything particular to the gay community like adoption. Anytime there is an adoption bill the threat of that is raised."

'RELIGIOUS VIEWPOINTS' LEGISLATION PROPOSED

Although none of the legislators Southern Voice contacted for this article knew of any lawmaker seeking support for bill to ban gay adoption, one social issue that might garner some attention this year is the Religious Viewpoints Antidiscrimination Act, authored by veteran lawmaker Rep. Tom Rice (R-Norcross). The act aims to protect religious speech in schools by requiring student-led forums before any school event, including athletic games and morning announcements.

Rice is a veteran lawmaker who serves on several important committees like Ways & Means, and typically does not author a great deal of social legislation. He was out of the country and could not be reached for comment.

One of the more concerning aspects of the bill to gay rights advocates is a part that requires schools to allow any religious speech on a "permissible topic."

Georgia Equality's Graham said his "immediate reaction" to the bill "is that it would allow 'God Hates Fags' or Straight Pride Day."

"But as I read the bill, it puts a lot of pressure on teachers to determine what is valid religious belief and expression," Graham said.

Georgia Equality has already begun to build an alliance to oppose the bill. Graham said he has reached out to the ACLU and will look for other civil rights and educator groups if the bill moves forward.

Georgia Equality has also hired Susan Saleska-Hamilton as a contract lobbyist for the session. Saleska-Hamilton has lobbied for Georgia Equality in the past and also represents the Feminist Women's Health Center, Center for Responsible Lending and the Georgia Trial Lawyers Association.

In terms of proactive legislation to help gay and transgender Georgians, Graham said his organization is working to build support for an anti-bullying bill that stalled last year. The measure would require schools to have stronger anti-bullying policies. Gay rights advocates hope passage of the anti-bullying bill would help pave the way for a state hate crimes bill that would include sexual orientation and gender identity.

ALCOHOL SALES ON SUNDAY?

Sen. Seth Harp (R-Midland) has already re-filed his bill from last year to legalize Sunday liquor sales in grocery stores. This year he is touting the bill as a way to increase revenue without adding new taxes.

"It's the same bill as last year," Harp said. "We took the version that came out of committee and re-filed it."

Sen. Jack Murphy (R-Cumming) has told several media outlets that he is considering filing a bill that would place a $3 to $5 fee on every patron entering an adult entertainment club, like Swinging Richards.

One proposed amendment to the state constitution sure to become contentious is House Resolution One, which would cap property tax assessments at 3 percent per year.

"It's a major priority item for the Republican caucus," Jacobs said.

The resolution will likely draw opposition from local governments who receive a significant amount of their funding through property taxes.

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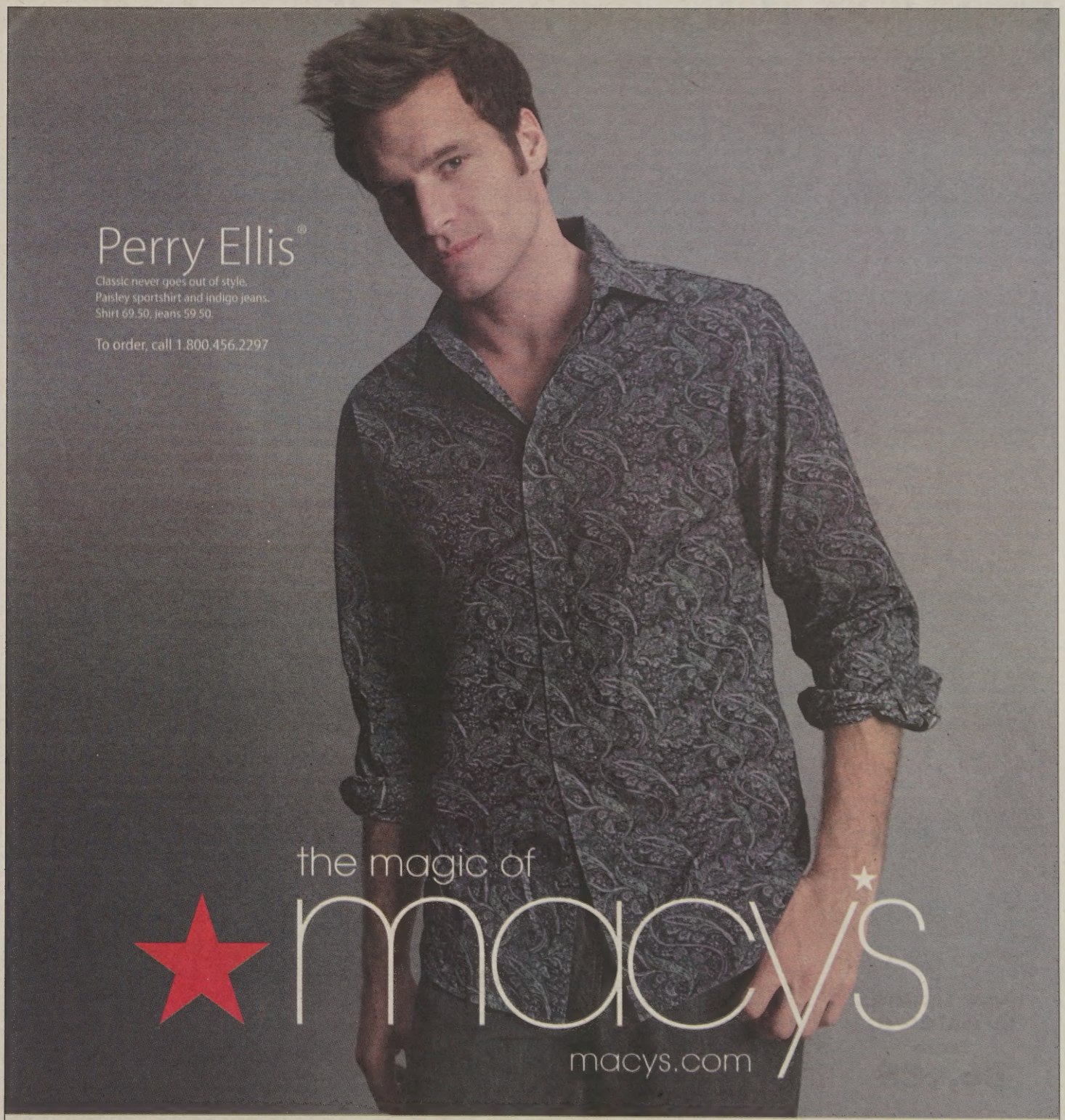

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Clarkston weighs sexual orientation protections

Vote on city ordinance may come next month

By DYANA BAGBY
dbagby@sovo.com

The Clarkston City Council voted Jan. 6 to consider adding sexual orientation protection to its nondiscrimination statement and could approve the ordinance as early as next month.

Council member Rosemarie Nelson asked the council to pass the policy change as a way to show the city is forward thinking, but council members balked at approving the ordinance without holding a work session on the issue first.

"They had two weeks to look at the ordinance and didn't say anything to me," Nelson said following Tuesday's meeting. "It's very simple wording. We've got to become more progressive."

Council member Warren Hadlock said he was in favor of the measure to show the city is "open and affirming" and agreed with the wording recommended by Nelson.

"I'm all for it ... and I look forward to discussing it in a work session," he said.

A work session will be held at the end of this month, Nelson said. The next city council meeting is slated for Feb. 3.

Clarkston had a population of approximately 8,000 as of the 2000 U.S. Census and is located northeast of Decatur. It is noted for its diversity due to many refugees resettling in the city.

Before officially introducing the legislation at the Jan. 6 meeting, Nelson told the council that adding sexual orientation protections would "demonstrate to our citizens, partners, vendors and potential partners our 'big heart' sensitively to the issues regarding protected classes and forward thinking."

"The marketing component would be tremendous, demonstrating our ability to not only embrace cultures but protected classes as a whole," she said.

The exact wording of the proposed ordinance states: "No employee of the city of Clarkston shall be discriminated against in promotion, discipline, pay, or any other conditions of employment based on sex, race, religion, national origin, citizenship, political affiliation, handicap, sexual orientation or any other characteristic protected by law."

While disappointed the measure was not approved at the Jan. 6 meeting, Nelson said she would continue to work on getting it passed.

"We're going to try to make this happen," she said. "I want people to know us not just as an international city, but that we welcome people from all backgrounds."

State Rep. Karla Drenner (D-Avondale Estates), who helped frame the proposed ordinance, said while DeKalb County may offer sexual orientation protections, having cities such as Clarkston do the same will serve as a way to make progress in a red state.

"I saw that Doraville did it [passed a nondiscrimination policy that included sexual orientation and gender identity in November] and it dawned on me we should work to also get these ordinances passed in municipalities, such as Clarkson as well as Avondale Estates and Pine Lake," she said.

"I spoke to all of them [Clarkston council members] in advance and everyone I spoke with did not have a problem with sexual orientation. I'll work with them to answer any questions they may have at the work session," Drenner added.

Georgia Equality is also working with Clarkston to pass the policy as part of its Campaign for a Fair Majority, said Executive Director Jeff Graham.

"I think what happened is a good thing and gives us the opportunity to work more closely. And we certainly hope to work with other municipalities in DeKalb County and outside metro Atlanta," he said.

Georgia cities and counties with sexual orientation included in their nondiscrimination statements are Atlanta, Decatur, Doraville, Savannah, East Point, Tybee Island, Lithia Springs, Athens-Clarke County, Fulton County and DeKalb County; Atlanta, Decatur and Doraville also include gender identity protections.

Clarkston City Council member **Rosemarie Nelson** is sponsoring legislation to ban discrimination against city workers on the basis of sexual orientation. (Photo courtesy City of Clarkston)

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10 p.m. at Moya Lounge
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'Experience the Dream' party
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'The Movement' party
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708 Spring St., www.wassupnatl.com

Traxx Girls
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www.myspace.com/atlfal_fan

Grown & Sexy party
6 p.m. at Django
495 Peachtree St.
www.wassupnatl.com

Winter Meltdown ft. Sheree Whitfield
8 p.m. at Club Europe
4001 Presidential Parkway
www.xtremeentertainment.moonfruit.com

My Girl Gotta Girlfriend party ft. Miss Sophia
8 p.m. at Club Miami, 3011 Buford Highway
www.traxxgirls.com

Monday, Jan. 19

Atlanta Black LGBT Coalition protest of Rick Warren
9 a.m. near the King Center, exact location TBD
blog.glbtatl.org/

Bayard Rustin/Audre Lorde Community Breakfast
10 a.m. at 139 Ralph McGill Blvd.

MLK March
1 p.m., Gay contingency to meet at the corner of Peachtree & Ellis streets

Celebrating a KING and his queen

Coretta Scott King reflection, Rick Warren protest part of gay MLK activities

By RYAN LEE
rlee@sovo.com

Three months after starting a rather glamorous job at the Atlanta airport in 1968, Winston Johnson found himself at the center of history, surrounded by celebrities and dignitaries during one of our nation's darkest hours.

Johnson, who grew up in rural Florida and almost ended his life during college because he was gay, moved to Atlanta with his lifelong partner, Leon Allen, in 1967. Shortly after arriving, Johnson was hired by an airline to cater to its high-end travelers, taxiing them from their planes to the airline's celebrity lounge.

On April 5, 1968, Johnson was assigned to drive for Abigail McCarthy, whose husband, U.S. Sen. Eugene McCarthy (D-Minn.), was running for president that year. Knowing that Abigail McCarthy was enduring a multi-hour layover, Johnson informed her that the plane carrying the body of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., who was assassinated in Memphis the day before, was about to arrive at the Atlanta airport.

McCarthy told Johnson that she and King's wife, Coretta Scott King, were close friends and asked him to drive her to the plane. As her husband's body and bronze casket were being unloaded from an airplane chartered by Robert Kennedy, Coretta Scott King embraced Abigail McCarthy and invited her to a gathering at the King home.

McCarthy asked Johnson if it was OK for him to drive her outside the airport, and soon, the two of them were in Dr. King's living room with the likes of Harry Belafonte and other celebrities, activists and politicians.

"People were just in shock," Johnson, 67, recalled. "It was just so strange to me. Here was this worldwide event, and somehow I kind of ended up in the middle of it."

Johnson recreates the moment he met Coretta Scott King, and the subsequent decades-long friendship that evolved between the two of them, during an MLK celebration at YouthPride Jan. 16.

Johnson will take part in a discussion with Dave Hayward of the gay Atlanta history project Touching Up Our Roots, who believes Johnson's historic friendship with Mrs. King needs to be shared with gay youth.

'I'LL BE THERE'

As Coretta Scott King grew into her own role as an activist and public speaker, Johnson often served as her airport driver. The two became close friends.

"We hit it off immediately and really liked each other," said Johnson, who began volunteering to help Coretta Scott King create the King Center in honor of her late husband.

Johnson and his partner were also involved in civil rights efforts, but the two closeted men were wary of participating in gay rights politics. Johnson's struggles with his sexual orientation once brought him seconds from racing his car off a Florida road, and almost cost him his job at the airport when a supervisor asked him if he was a homosexual.

The quiet, closeted life the couple had carved out was dramatically disrupted in 1986, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Bowers v. Hardwick — a case that arose from Atlanta — that it was within a state's right to arrest gay people who violated the state's sodomy law by engaging in oral or anal sex.

"It just blew us out of the water," Johnson said. "You can imagine, back then, how scary that was."

Johnson and Allen got in touch with gay activists at the Human Rights Campaign and soon became a part of the movement. Johnson thought to call Coretta Scott King and explain to her the injustice of the Bowers v. Hardwick decision, but first he would have to come out to her after almost 20 years of friendship.

Atlanta resident **Winston Johnson** befriended the late **Coretta Scott King**, and helped her become active in the gay rights movement. (Photo courtesy of Johnson)

"I said, 'There's something that we should've talked about years ago, but we just haven't,'" Johnson recalled. "She responded really beautifully, and said, 'I can see that you and Leon loved each other.'

"I said, 'I'm telling you this because I want you to do something,'" Johnson added. "She said, 'You just tell me where and when, and I'll be there.'"

That fall, MLK's widow made her first public comments in support of gay rights, an issue she continued to champion until her death in 2006.

As he prepares to address YouthPride, Johnson reflects on messages he wishes he had heard as a young gay person struggling with his identity.

"That I was OK, that I was OK just like I was," said Johnson, who has also learned the value of coming out. "If you know someone loves you, they're still going to love you. That would've been wonderful, and that's the main thing I'll be telling those kids at YouthPride."

WARREN PROTEST

One message to gay youth that Johnson does not look forward to during MLK weekend is the appearance of Rev. Rick Warren at King's Ebenezer Baptist Church on Jan. 19, a day before Warren delivers the invocation at President-elect Barack Obama's inauguration.

Warren has been widely criticized by gay rights activists for supporting bans on same-sex marriage, and suggesting that legalization of same-sex unions might lead to incestuous or polygamous marriages.

"Knowing his anti-gay views and seeing him next to the U.S. president, that would've been pretty bad for me to take at 15," Johnson said.

The Atlanta Black LGBT Coalition is leading a protest of Warren's appearance at Ebenezer at 9 a.m. on Jan. 19.

"We are going to be present and taking a stand to assert our humanity," said Craig Washington, one of the founding members of the Black LGBT Coalition, which is working with Georgia Equality, GLBT ATL and Spark to coordinate the protest.

"In a pointed way, we're challenging the homophobia and patriarchy that Warren's stances perpetuate," Washington said. "It's unfortunate, and it's a backpedaling of progress when we elevate someone as bigoted as Rick Warren to serve in a prominent role in the inauguration. It contradicts the promise, quite frankly. It contradicts the promise that Obama has symbolized."

The exact location of the Jan. 19 protest has not been determined, but it will likely take place in the vicinity of the King Center, which is the protest's primary target, Washington said.

After the protest, organizers host the annual Bayard Rustin/Audre Lorde Community Breakfast at 139 Ralph McGill Blvd., which has become a staple for gay activists and allies during MLK weekend.

The organizing committee for the annual MLK march includes the Bayard Rustin/Audre Lorde breakfast on its official schedule of events, and is continuing its tradition of inviting gay and transgender speakers to the mainstream MLK march. This year's gay speaker is Michaël Brewer, a young activist who worked to decrease homophobia at his school, Morehouse College.

"The MLK march itself has always been, as long as I've been in Atlanta, one of the most welcoming events," Washington said. "The organizing committee has been so inclusive of its LGBT members and our presence."

Following the breakfast, a gay contingency will meet at the corner of Peachtree and Ellis streets to join in the annual city-wide MLK march, then listen to Brewer along with other speakers.

Let freedom dance

Gay, lesbian promoters plan big parties for MLK weekend

By RYAN LEE
rlee@sovo.com

Having conquered the airwaves to become America's favorite guilty pleasure, the stars of "The Real Housewives of Atlanta" continue their takeover of gay Atlanta during Martin Luther King Jr. weekend.

Sheree Whitfield takes time out of her ongoing effort to gain a seven-figure divorce settlement to host the Lion's Den's "Winter Meltdown" party at Club Europe Jan. 18.

"They're planning to do some limited taping of the show for the next season," says Gregory Allen, head of Xtreme Entertainment, the group behind the Lion's Den.

Prior to the Atlanta edition of "The Real Housewives" airing, Whitfield attended one of the Lion's Den's parties during Labor Day Weekend, where she served as a judge during the Xtreme Catwalk fashion show.

"We've built a relationship with her from there," says Allen, who hopes that Whitfield will bring her yet-to-be-released fashion line to future Lion's Den fashion shows.

Several of the most colorful stars of "The Real Housewives of Atlanta" are becoming fixtures of the city's gay nightlife scene. In addition to Whitfield frequenting Lion's Den parties, Kim Zolciak has recently fallen in love with Blake's on the Park, and NeNe Leakes is making frequent appearances at the Buckhead gay club Vita.

Leakes drops in at Club 708 during MLK weekend for a Jan. 17 party hosted by WassupNATL. WassupNATL has one of the busiest party schedules for MLK weekend, with six nightlife events at six different clubs from Jan. 15-19.

Behind Labor Day weekend, MLK is typically the second-biggest party weekend for black gay Atlanta. This year's celebration may be more low-key than past years, as many out-of-towners are expected to head to Washington D.C. for Barack Obama's inauguration instead of making the traditional trip to Atlanta.

"Those of us who are event organizers in Atlanta, we were initially concerned about how we would be impacted [by the inauguration]," Allen says. "We're being very conservative in terms of what we would typically do for this weekend because we really don't know what the impact will be. Nonetheless, I feel pretty good about it that people are going to be in Atlanta."

PACKED SCHEDULE

TRAXX Atlanta offers a fully loaded schedule for gay men during MLK weekend, most notably its "The Movement" party on Jan. 17 that is expected to draw thousands of revelers.

The ladies behind Traxx Girls also provide a full schedule of parties, beginning with a kickoff event at Club Miami on Jan. 16 that is hosted by supermodel Tomika Skanes and reality TV star Frankie Lons, better known as the mother of R&B superstar Keyshia Coles.

Traxx Girls hosts a Saturday night party at Vino Libro Jan. 17 featuring acclaimed DJ Mary Mac, followed by an after-party at Traxx hosted by hip-hop artist and actress Eve. On Jan. 18, Traxx Girls hosts a sports-themed house ball, hosted by Legendary Mother Jamie Balenciaga, at the Ice Lounge downtown.

Following the ball, the Traxx Girls close out their MLK weekend with a "My Girlfriend Gotta Girlfriend" party hosted by V-103's Miss Sophia at Club Miami. Traxx Girls also offers daytime entertainment and activities throughout MLK weekend, including a women's basketball tournament at Buchanan High School in Norcross Jan. 17 and Jan. 18.

Luxhery Entertainment also caters to lesbians throughout MLK weekend, beginning with a Jan. 17 party at the Marriott downtown. The next day, Luxhery hosts the "Brown Sugar Vibe Brunch," a spoken-word event at Sugar Hill in Underground Atlanta.

NeNe Leakes (above) and **Sheree Whitfield** of 'The Real Housewives of Atlanta' will appear at separate gay parties during MLK weekend. (Photos courtesy Bravo)

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Richardson withdrawal renews push for gay Cabinet member

Gay man to serve on senior White House staff

By CHRIS JOHNSON

New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson's decision to withdraw as President-elect Barack Obama's nominee for commerce secretary prompted activist groups to ask Obama to name an openly gay official to the post.

The vacancy, announced earlier this week, gives Obama an opportunity to nominate a gay person to his Cabinet, something that transition officials have heavily hinted would happen in private meetings with gay rights activists. Some of those activists publicly expressed their disappointment and frustration when Obama failed to include a gay nominee after making his final Cabinet picks.

Richardson, who initially competed against Obama for the Democratic presidential nomination but later endorsed him, withdrew as the commerce secretary nominee amidst a federal investigation into how his political donors landed a transportation contract in New Mexico.

Joe Solmonese, president of the Human Rights Campaign, said in a statement Monday that Richardson's withdrawal means Obama "is presented with yet another opportunity to make good on his promise of equality for all LGBT people."

Denis Dison, spokesperson for the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund, said his organization and the Presidential Appointments Project continue to encourage Obama to nominate an openly gay person for his Cabinet and that the new vacancy "presents another opportunity for them to look at an LGBT applicant."

Dison said Fred Hochberg, a gay man who previously was under consideration to head the Small Business Administration, is "out there today as the best chance the LGBT community" has for a nominee as commerce secretary.

Hochberg serves on the Obama transition team and declined to comment for this article. He served as deputy and acting administrator of the SBA under President Clinton and until recently was the dean of Milano, the New School for Management & Urban Policy in New York.

A grassroots effort has emerged to encourage Obama to select Hochberg as commerce secretary. Paul Sousa, 21, a student at Northeastern University in Boston, established the online organization Equal Rep, which encourages those who want to see a gay person in Obama's Cabinet to call or e-mail the transition team every day until a decision has been made for the commerce secretary nomination, or until Jan. 19, the eve of Inauguration Day.

"We're not pushing his name just because he's gay," Sousa said. "We're pushing his name because he's highly qualified and the fact that he's openly gay is kind of icing on the cake there."

The Obama transition team declined to comment this week on possible appointments for commerce secretary.

Gay activists are calling on President-elect **Barack Obama** (left) to nominate an openly gay official as commerce secretary following New Mexico Gov. **Bill Richardson**'s decision to withdraw from consideration. (Photo by Pablo Martinez Monsivais/AP)

GAY STAFF APPOINTEE

In a separate development, Obama on Monday announced that an openly gay man would serve on his staff as director of the White House Office of Management & Administration.

Brad Kiley, the appointee, is director of operations for the Obama transition team and an official for the Center for American Progress think tank.

The head of the White House Office of Management & Administration is charged with overseeing the operations of the White House in matters such as salaries, office space and budgeting. It is not a Cabinet-level position.

Kiley served as deputy assistant to the president for management and administration under President Clinton, according to the Center for American Progress web site.

He also was director of finance and administration for the 1996 Democratic National Convention and has held leadership positions at NARAL, a pro-choice organization, and the International AIDS Trust, the web site says.

Portland becomes largest U.S. city with gay mayor

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Portland became the largest city in the United States with an openly gay mayor last week as a longtime City Hall insider took the oath of office.

Sam Adams, 45, was sworn into office at 12:01 a.m. New Year's Day at City Hall during a ceremony attended by a crowd of about 40 people that included his mother and his partner.

Adams won the job to lead the northwestern city of about 575,000 people seven months ago in a primary race by capturing 58 percent of the vote, making a runoff election unnecessary.

None of Adams' opponents raised the issue of his sexual orientation in the race. Neither did he.

"This is a testament to how fair-minded Portlanders are that it wasn't an issue," Adams said. "I spend my time on the basic issues of life. A part of that includes equal rights, but that's not even close to a majority of the time."

Adams grew up in a working-class household that he said was at times dependent on government food aid and subsidized housing. Just as being a gay man drives much of his political activism, he said, his working-class background influences his ambitions as mayor.

"My passions for public service include promoting social justice equality for all, but it obviously also includes finding good jobs for people, which is also part of my family's background of not being able to always have economic security," he said. "Being gay is part of me. So is being Irish-American. So is being from a small Oregon town."

SOVO SOUTHERN VOICE NATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

Sam Adams, the new mayor of Portland, Ore., is openly gay, but isn't letting that fact define him. 'Being gay is part of me. So is being Irish-American. So is being from a small Oregon town.' (Photo by Greg Wahl-Stephens/AP)

CRIME

4 arrested in gang rape of Calif. lesbian

RICHMOND, Calif. (AP) — Two men and two teens have been arrested on suspicion of gang-raping a woman last month in the San Francisco Bay area while allegedly taunting her for being a lesbian, police said.

Officers arrested Humberto Hernandez Salvador at his Richmond home Dec. 30, Richmond police Lt. Mark Gagan said. The 31-year-old is being held without bail on gang rape, kidnapping and carjacking charges.

Police also arrested Dec. 30 a 15-year-old Richmond boy and a 16-year-old Hercules boy, who were being held at a juvenile detention center on similar charges. Their names were not released.

Josue Gonzalez, 21, turned himself in Dec. 31 after police announced they were searching for him. He was wanted on charges of gang rape, kidnapping and carjacking.

Gagan said Gonzalez asked for an attorney when he turned himself in but said nothing about his alleged role in the attack.

"We felt that while these four suspects were at large, a large cross-section of our population felt unsafe," Gagan said. "Now that the fourth one is behind bars, we can all breathe a sigh of relief."

Detectives say the 28-year-old victim was attacked Dec. 13 after she got out of her car, which bore a rainbow Gay Pride sticker. The alleged attackers made comments indicating they knew she was a lesbian, police said.

Authorities have characterized the case as a hate crime. Police said the victim lives openly with a female partner.

COURTS

Ark. official will not step away from adoption suit

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Attorney General Dustin McDaniel said he doesn't plan to step aside from a suit over a law banning unmarried couples from fostering or adopting children, despite his personal opposition to the new restriction.

McDaniel had opposed Initiated Act 1, which was approved by voters in November, and his political action committee gave $1,000 to a campaign against the law in the fall. The Arkansas chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union sued the state over the law last week, saying it discriminates and doesn't put the best interest of children first.

"I did say and did believe that it was not a good policy for kids. I think we need more foster parents, not less," McDaniel said Jan. 2. "However, I never commented on the constitutionality of the act and this office can defend the constitutionality of the act."

The head of the Arkansas Family Council, a group that campaigned for the measure, said he's concerned about McDaniel representing the state in the lawsuit but has stopped short of calling for the attorney general's office to recuse from the case.

"Obviously, we've got serious questions as to whether he's got a conflict of interest," said Jerry Cox, the council's president.

VIEWPOINTS

In support of the Rick Warren protests

President-elect **Barrack Obama** invited Rev. **Rick Warren** to give the invocation at his inauguration, touching off a firestorm of controversy. (Photo by AP)

Obama's hope and King's dream do not find their fulfillment in political expediency

By KENNETH L. SAMUEL

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT TO MANY CIVIL RIGHTS LEADERS, THE planned protests regarding the selection of Rick Warren to deliver the invocation at Barack Obama's inauguration, and to deliver the keynote address at the Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration at Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church, are justified.

While expressing some disagreement with Rev. Warren's views about gay people, most leaders have generally defended his invitations to participate in these events based upon the conviction that both Barack Obama and Martin Luther King Jr. stand for reaching out to persons of divergent views and bringing them together in dialogue.

While there is great value in such a conviction, the fact is that Rick Warren has not been invited into a dialogue at either occasion. He has been invited to invoke God's presence on behalf of the nation at one occasion and to speak in tribute to the life and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. at the other.

TO BE SURE, IF REVEREND WARREN HAD BEEN INVITED INTO A dialogue about marriage equality, he most likely would have declined, given that his absolute confidence in the truth of traditional marriage makes him blind to any other truth that transcends tradition. How convenient it is to forget that slavery, sexism and war all have long standing precedence in tradition, but tenuous validation in truth.

If Barack Obama or the King Center had selected Reverend Jeremiah Wright to speak at these auspicious occasions, more than a few persons would have become agitated to the point of having their heads explode. Why? Because many would have seen Reverend Wright's selection not as an invitation to dialogue, but as an affront to their national solidarity and their personal dignity (though Reverend Wright has not stood publicly against equal rights for any American).

Apparently, anger about America's historic and current racism is totally unacceptable, while denial of equal rights based upon sexual orientation is not only to be tolerated, but given center stage.

THE HOPE OF BARACK OBAMA AND THE DREAM OF MARTIN Luther King, Jr. do not find their fulfillment in political expediency, religious protocol or popular consensus.

Obama's hope and King's dream should inspire each of us toward a greater commitment to freedom and equality for all persons. Indeed, it will take Americans of every race, religion, class, culture and sexual orientation to tackle the challenges which now confront us as a nation.

I am certain that gay rights groups and their allies would certainly prefer to be joining hands and hearts with the Obama administration and the King Center in the quest to revitalize the American economy, improve public education, save social security, provide universal health care, protect the environment and end the war in Iraq.

Instead, we must now deal with the sting of having been again slapped in the face by fellow fire fighters before we can even focus on putting out the fire which threatens to engulf everyone's house. These "minor" insults are actually major distractions that we should no longer allow.

Lest we continue to be derailed from the common aim of "liberty and justice for all," the protests must proceed.

Dr. Kenneth Samuel is senior pastor of Victory for the World United Church of Christ — Stone Mountain and co-chair of People for the American Way's African American Leadership Council. He can be reached through this publication.

Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly

How LGBT people can stand for equality under the Gold Dome

By KARLA DRENNER

WITH THE GEORGIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION opening Jan. 12, I am again thinking about these timeless words: "To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Could any words be more appropriate for legislators as they assume office?

First, to "act justly" is to do what is right and fair, not just what is politically expedient or easy. Power brings with it many temptations that can be almost overwhelming, yet we must be people of empathy and compassion. As public servants we must allow the injustices of the world to impact us deep within so that we will act to reverse them.

Then, we are to "love mercy," not just to practice mercy and kindness but to make it our passion. We must never overlook those who cannot care for themselves or not see those in our world who live under the constant threat of inequality, disease or the tyranny of an oppressive majority.

As public servants we are called upon to work with compassion and determination for a better world — for everyone. I think this is our greatest calling because most of us imagine ourselves to be quite loving when we are really lying to ourselves, an inevitable consequence of being human.

WHEN WE ARE FACED WITH THOSE THAT PREACH against us or those that would deny us our rights, we forget that it is our differences that require us to heart stretch. Our ability to stretch our hearts requires that each of us must take a stand for equality before our friends, our families and our God. This movement of mercy helps us to learn how to live more fully as we face the future AND justice, then, becomes a possibility.

Finally, we are called to "walk humbly with your God." Every word in that phrase is important. To walk humbly involves a softer way of walking as opposed to the trampling that seems to accompany arrogance. We are to walk with God, not for God. Too many people in the political world fail to understand this truth. They announce before the TV cameras that God is on their side, rather than they are on God's side.

When we are with God, we are by definition taking the right path, the path to righteousness. Humility demands a self-surrender that is the basis of any true self-love. Arrogance, such as what I see and hear every day at the Capitol, is an empty well, and when people cling to it they die of thirst — in wanting for the wellspring of love and light.

This is so true of many of our so-called religious leaders. Whenever religion promotes fear instead of faith, anguish in place of awe, guilt rather than grace, such a religion has gone astray.

SO HOW CAN WE AS THE GLBT COMMUNITY LIVE up to the standards of justice, mercy and humility? We have to be on the right side, not on the side of the Right.

In the face of those that do not always act justly towards the GLBT community, we must rise above the fray and support our LGBT organizations — beginning with Georgia Equality, whose first priority is to help those who, sometimes, cannot help themselves.

First on the agenda must be to pass the anti-bullying legislation that won wide bipartisan support in the 2008 session. By doing so, we will also build bridges to advance real hate crimes legislation as we continue to build a fair majority of supporters in the state legislature.

In response to the passage of a constitutional amendment banning gay adoption in Arkansas earlier this year, all of us must assist Georgia Equality in being vigilant about defending any efforts to restrict parental rights for LGBT Georgians.

Lastly, we must also actively monitor the projected cuts in the state budget to minimize the impact on LGBT and allied Georgians, paying special attention to reducing state support for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program.

In the midst of trouble, turmoil and tribulation of a legislative session, I have found no better way to stay centered then to "to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with my God."

State Rep. Karla Drenner (D-Avondale Estates) is beginning her fifth term in the Georgia General Assembly. She remains the state's first and only openly gay state lawmaker.

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soapbox

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SOUND OFF

Will gay gun ownership lead to more violence?

Re: "Atlanta's Pink Pistols aim for acceptance in a community often opposed to firearms" (news, Dec. 19)

Great article! Hurray for bold, ballsy journalism!

I'm sorry, but saying that answering violence with violence is the wrong thing, this hippie BS, will get us killed. There will be a time when the right wing will get so pissed about change in this country that they'll take it out on us. We must be able to respond in a way they'll hear. I'm a liberal and I don't believe in a god-given right to an AK47, but I do believe in the right to bear arms as much as I believe in free speech.

It's not really about "answering violence with violence" or being a vigilante. I can't speak for all the other gun owners, but I know that getting my permit and carrying a gun has only made me more cautious. If there were places I wouldn't go because they were too dangerous when I was unarmed, I still don't go there! My gun doesn't make me invincible, and it's not a substitute for common sense and caution. It's like a fire extinguisher in that sense. I have a fire extinguisher in my kitchen in case something goes wrong, but I'm still careful not to start grease fires in the first place!

Well, that's it then: All the homosexuals of Nazi Germany would have had to do is pair up when they went walking at night. That would have saved them from eventual murder at the hands of the fascist regime for certain! C'mon, Ms. Fountain, that's nice for a fairy tale, but in real life, haters won't reconsider attacking because we outnumber them in the street. The only thing that they understand is serious aggression. In most cases, seeing a weapon carried in full view is enough to make them think twice.

What I find amazing is AVP's comment of "If someone from the Pink Pistols feels they have to arm themselves to be safe ... we can't agree. Most often, we find, their weapons are used against them." It's a big fat lie. I don't know of a single incident where any member of the Pink Pistols has had their weapons taken away, and used against them. Our motto is true, Armed Gays do not get bashed.

I am straight and I am a gun owner. I live in Midtown and have many gay friends and neighbors. I support the Pink Pistols 100 percent. I wish we had other support groups like this, such as the Gray Pistols (elderly citizens for carry) etc. It's time people who have a history of being victimized or perceived as weak, started defending themselves. Go Pink Pistols!

"Most often, we find, their weapons are used against them." I'm sorry, but who is this we you speak for, Ms. Fountain? Actual studies by actual trained researchers show exactly the opposite — that just possession of a weapon prevents a huge number of crimes every year, including rape and murder.

Michael Savage supporters: SoVo editor is a fascist

Re: "WSB Radio should dump Michael Savage as a gift to Atlanta" (editorial by Laura Douglas-Brown, Dec. 19)

Criticism of others is the soul of democracy and the safeguard of modern society! This op-ed reeks of fascism!

Laura should be ashamed at her views towards a great American as Michael Savage. It is obvious that she is a gay advocate and she is one of the reasons that America is degrading daily. Laura needs to be disarmed from having a voice that spreads hate (as she would have it).

Savage speaks his opinion and he has a right to do so. You want freedom to live outside of the closet, support freedom of speech regardless of your political perspective.

Boy, you people should live for the day when you have half the guts of Michael Savage. He is one of the most popular voices in America. I doubt if any of you invertebrates can shake his listener base. I hope you realize the reason he and so many other talk hosts are the immune system of our democracy... and you are trying to be the AIDS virus. The public buys Savages show, while they don't buy your lopsided BS agenda.

WHEN A FETISH BECOMES AN ADDICTION

THE Q Online

What do you think about President-elect Barack Obama choosing Rev. Rick Warren to give the invocation at his inauguration?

- It's a slap in the face to the gay community; Obama should never have chosen him. 43%
- I don't like Warren, but I think gay activists are making too big of a deal about this. 37%
- It's a good choice. Obama proves he is going to reach out to Americans of all political and religious backgrounds. 16%
- Rick who? 4%

Were you able to bring a same-sex date to your office holiday party?

- Yes, I work in a gay-friendly environment. 48%
- Yes, even though my office isn't gay-friendly, I don't want to hide. 20%
- No, I would be worried about how other people would react. 15%
- My office didn't have a holiday party. 17%

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Fans of talk jock **Michael Savage** say he is 'the immune system of our democracy.' (Photo by AP)

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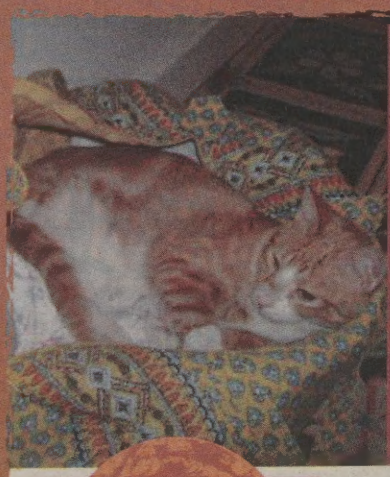

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SOUTHERN VOICE COMMUNITY

FRIDAY, JAN. 9

Join the women of **Fourth Tuesday** for a monthly happy hour at **Paris Decatur**. 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at 308H W. Ponce de Leon Place, 404-687-1965. www.fourthtuesday.org, www.parisdecatur.com

SATURDAY, JAN. 10

Quicksilver Country Dancers kick up their heels for a **Gender-Free Contra Dance**. It's like square-dancing, but performed in lines. Newcomers' orientation at 7:30 p.m., dance at 8 p.m. in the social hall of Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta, 1911 Cliff Valley Way. www.qcdancers.org

The **Hotlanta Volleyball Association** hosts the **Winter Wallop** tournament at Emory starting at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, followed by the Spring Pre-League Registration party Sunday, Jan. 11. The season begins in February. hotlantavolleyball.org

SUNDAY, JAN. 11

Charis Circle and the Atlanta Lesbian Health Initiative team up for a **Journaling Workshop**, which includes tips on sharing your stories, a half-hour personal coaching session, journaling materials and regular follow-ups. 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. at ALHI, 1530 Dekalb Ave. Write elizabeth@chariscircle.org or call 404-524-0304. www.chariscircle.org, www.thehealthinitiative.org

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 14

Grab your cue — league play for the **Metro Atlanta BCA Pool League** begins tonight at 8 p.m. at several local gay bars. atlbca@bellsouth.net, www.atlbca.com

THURSDAY, JAN. 15

The **Atlanta Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce** hosts a **Business Builder Lunch** where current and potential members meet for informal networking. 11:50 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Highland Tap, 1026 N. Highland Ave. 404-377-4258, www.aglccserver.com

SATURDAY, JAN. 17

The **Atlanta Bucks** teach **Rugby 101**, an introduction to the sport and the city's gay team. Afterwards, head to the Atlanta Eagle for Bucks' bar night, with drinks and shots served by the team. www.atlantabucksrugby.org.

ON THE WEB:
For other calendars of special events, visit www.sovo.com.

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Open and affirming

New faith alliance hopes to open more church doors to gay worshipers

By MATT SCHAFER
mschafer@sovo.com

REV. AL SHARPTON IS COMING TO ATLANTA TO bless the start of a new religious organization that aims to unite gay-friendly churches.

The Alliance of Affirming Faith Based Organizations is the effort of a number of Atlanta ministers, including Pastor Dennis Meredith of Tabernacle Baptist Church and Rev. Dr. Kenneth Samuel of Victory Church in Stone Mountain.

Sharpton, a vocal gay rights ally who supports full marriage equality for gay people, was in Atlanta in 2006 as the keynote speaker for the National Black Justice Coalition's summit on homophobia in the black church.

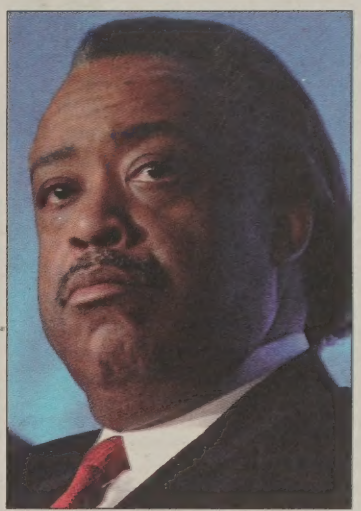
Meredith said he watched religious organizations funnel money and power into supporting Proposition 8 in California to ban same-sex marriage and felt a need for a counterpoint.

"The only way we are going to combat all of these other conservative organizations is with another religious voice," Meredith says.

Once considered a rising star of the evangelical faith movement, Meredith garnered national attention once he started preaching a "Gospel of Inclusion" after his son came out to him. Meredith recently told his congregation that he is bisexual.

"I was preaching about how God uses everybody… and I said I thought you ought to know," Meredith says. He noted the movie "Milk," documenting the life of gay civil rights leader Harvey Milk and his plea for gays to come out of the closet, moved him to go public with his bisexuality.

"The difference between the other organizations and me is that I know these closeted pastors, I've run around town with them," Meredith says. "I told [my congregation] to let them know who I am, and I am still your pastor."



Rev. **Al Sharpton** will be a guest speaker at the First Annual Human Rights Ecumenical Service. (Photo by AP)

THE NEW ALLIANCE HAS A THREE-PART PLATFORM, focusing on civil, social/economic and faith issues. These planks include goals such as overturning gay marriage bans, winning civil unions, providing job training, ending discrimination within the gay community, and legitimizing gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender affirming churches, among other issues.

"There are a lot of churches who are affirming, but they aren't out front about it," Meredith says. "We've always been very affirming, but [some other churches say], 'If you're GLBT you can come to my church but you can't be a big part of it,' and they don't take any political action."

Another alliance goal is to erase discrimination within the gay community.

"In my church we have everyone, straight, gay, we have a transgender ministry, and we all work together," Meredith says. "If I can do that here in my church with the message of God's love then we can do that across the nation."

THE ALLIANCE IS ALSO LOOKING TO PARTNER WITH the Atlanta Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce and has invited Chamber President Sheila Merritt to attend the service.

"What they have asked me to do is speak to the folks about what the AGLCC is about and how that falls in line with their platform," Merritt says. "Some of their platform is everything from working to rid our community from discrimination, but really the part that is interesting to me for the chamber is developing and building GLBT small businesses."

Merritt says the campaign parallels the 1960s push by the civil rights movement to support black owned and operated businesses.

WHAT INITIALLY STARTED AS AN ATLANTA-BASED alliance may quickly grow into a nation-wide organization. Organizers say they have received a steady stream of inquiries from churches in an array of denominations across the country.

"Every day I get more phone calls, I'm signing more churches up, I'm answering questions," says Kandice Phillips, who is helping to organize the alliance. "Right now we are launching it in Atlanta, but because of the outreach of Al Sharpton and some of these churches that have satellite congregations in North Carolina, South Carolina, and they all want to be a part of the alliance."

Phillips said Sharpton will serve as the face of the organization, and use his national network of contacts developed by years working in the civil rights movement and his presidential campaigns.

"They realized that pastors can reach people faster than any other means of communication because they get the people in every week," Phillips says. "Some of these churches have 200 people, some of them have 2,000 people, but it's the most effective way to reach people.

Human Rights Ecumenical Service
Jan. 11, 5 p.m.
Tabernacle Baptist Church
475 Boulevard NE
404-876-3777
www.tbcatlanta.org

Atlanta nightlife 'killed' when police shut down Backstreet on NYE

SOVO FLASHBACK

When the lights came up at Backstreet three hours into the New Year in 2004, the era of 24-hour clubbing in Atlanta suddenly ended. It was the night Backstreet fought against in court for nearly three years.

"People were stunned," said Charlie Brown, head diva of the Charlie Brown Cabaret at Backstreet for 13 years. "Just like in shock. It killed nightlife in Atlanta."

Officers from the Atlanta Police Department closed Backstreet, which has been "open and pouring" since 1975, at 3 a.m. because attorneys for the club reached the end of their legal battle to retain the club's 24-hour license.

New Year's Eve also turned out to be an earlier-than-usual night for other bars in Atlanta, even though they don't operate 24-hour clubs. Atlanta police began to enforce the new 3 a.m. closing time that went into effect Jan. 1, cutting off an hour of late night partying and sales.

On Nov. 26, 2003, a three-judge panel of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a March 2003 ruling by U.S. District Court Judge Clarence Cooper that permitted the city to enforce an ordinance passed in 2000 that severely restricted the eligibility for private club licenses. Backstreet and other around-the-clock venues could not meet the new requirements to remain private clubs.

Atlanta's former 24-hour club Backstreet (File photo)

Backstreet finally closed in the summer of 2004 and was torn down to make room for condominiums.

— *Southern Voice*, Jan. 9, 2004

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JAN. 9 - JAN. 18

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FRIDAY JAN. 9

Girlyman, the quirky, queer-inclusive three-piece band, returns to Decatur's favorite live music venue. 8 p.m. at Eddie's Attic, 515-B North McDonough St., Decatur. 404-3774976, www.eddiesattic.com

The **YouthPride Black & White Ball** includes a live DJ, a drag show and a $50 American Express gift card raffle. 8 p.m. at YouthPride, 1017 Edgewood Ave. 404-521-9713, www.youthpride.org

SUNDAY JAN. 11

Join writers Julia Watts, Jane Volbrecht, Chezon Jackson and others at the **'Women. Period'** readings. 8 p.m. at Charis Books & More, 1189 Euclid Ave. 404-524-0304, www.charisbooksandmore.com

WEDNESDAY JAN. 14

'Follow the Yellow Brick Road' is this month's theme for the infamous Bingo game that benefits Pets Are Loving Support. 6:30 p.m. doors, 7:30 first ball drop at Jungle, 2115 Faulkner Road. 404-876-PALS, www.palsatlanta.org

THURSDAY JAN. 15

Atlanta Executive Network hosts local artist **Robert Sherer** for an evening of artwork as well as to raise awareness of Kennesaw State University's Robert Sherer Scholarship for gay students. 6:45 p.m. at Trois, 1180 Peachtree St. #A. www.aen.org

THURSDAY JAN. 15 – MONDAY JAN. 19
Martin Luther King Jr. Weekend mixes celebration and reverence for five full days. See our calendar of events on Page 8.

Celebrate a sneak peek at **'The L-Word' Season 6 Premiere** with the Human Rights Campaign/Atlanta three days before the Showtime TV debut. 7 p.m. at Jungle, 2115 Faulkner Road. http://atlanta.hrc.org

Join Megan Volpert and the slam poets of **Cliterati's Open No-Mic Night** at Charis Books & More, 1189 Euclid Ave. 404-524-0304, www.charisbooksandmore.com

THURSDAY JAN. 15 – SUNDAY JAN. 18

A Weekend Of One Act Plays presents five shows, including David Kravitz's lesbian-themed **'Duck: Two Breasts, Sauteed.'** 8 p.m. Thursday and Friday, 7:30 p.m. Saturday and 3 p.m. Sunday at Norcross Cultural Arts & Community Center, 10 Britt Ave. NW Norcross. 404-519-7591, onionmanproductions.com

PHOTO VIA DJDAVIDKNAPP.COM

SATURDAY JAN. 10

Atlanta-grown **DJ David Knapp** brings his circuit grooves very close to home. 10 p.m. at Jungle, 2115 Faulkner Road. 404-844-8800, www.myspace.com/jungle_bradwilliams

COURTESY BROADWAY ACROSS AMERICA

SUNDAY JAN. 11

Back by popular demand, the touring Broadway production of **'Hairspray'** returns to Atlanta. Runs through Jan. 18 at Cobb Energy Centre, 2800 Cobb Galleria Parkway. 770-916-2801, www.cobbenergycentre.com

PHOTO VIA LADYBUNNY.NET

THURSDAY JAN. 15
The one and only **Lady Bunny** takes on the role of the preacher's wife in the raucous play **'Veranda.'** Bunny plays through Jan. 31 in the ongoing show. Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.; Sundays at 3 p.m. at Ansley Park Playhouse, 1545 Peachtree St. 404-875-1193

Arial and sensual acts with a lesbian twist are the draw for **'Cirque du Soiree,'** the latest event from SWA-RA Productions. 8 p.m. at Bellissima, 560 Amsterdam Ave. 404-917-0220, myspace.com/bellissima_lounge

Escape into **'The Restoration,'** a new art exhibit and sale at the gay-owned Bill Lowe Gallery. Opening reception 6 p.m.-9 p.m. at 1555 Peachtree St. 404-352-8114, www.lowegallery.com

SATURDAY JAN. 17
Urban Couture presents **'Doggies on the Catwalk,'** a fashion show for people and pets to raise money for Pets Are Loving Support. 8 p.m. at Grady High School Gymnasium, 929 Charles Allen Drive. www.palsatlanta.org

After a years-long run in Vegas, **Celine Dion** visits Atlanta on her latest concert tour. 8 p.m. at Philips Arena, 1 Philips Drive. www.ticketmaster.com, www.philipsarena.com

Nightlife hops with three dance parties. The return of the **Studio 54 Party at Jungle** goes head to head with guest **DJ Hector Fonseca** at Heretic, followed by a late night/early morning set by **DJ Sin Morera** at the Bodyshop. Studio 54: 10 p.m. at Jungle, 2115 Faulkner Road, myspace.com/jungle_bradwilliams. Fonseca: 10 p.m. at Heretic, 2069 Cheshire Bridge Road. www.hereticatlanta.com. Morera: 2:30 a.m. at the Bodyshop, 2675 Johnson Road, bodyshopatlanta.com

SUNDAY JAN. 18
Enjoy **Southern Voice Night** at the Alliance Theater for **"Jesus Christ Superstar Gospel."** Our readers receive a 15 percent discount off the ticket price with promo code SOVO. 7:30 p.m. at Alliance Theater, 1280 Peachtree St. NE. 404-733-4650, www.alliancetheatre.org

upcoming

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					JAN. 9 **Girlyman** at Eddie's Attic. www.eddiesattic.com **'Women. Period.'** readings at Charis. www.charisbooksandmore.com	**JAN. 10** **DJ David Knapp** at Jungle. myspace.com/jungle_bradwilliams
JAN. 11 **Salvation Sunday brunch** at Maxim Prime. www.socialatl.com **Journaling Workshop** through Charis at Atlanta Lesbian Health Initiative. alhi.org, chariscircle.org	**JAN. 12** **T-grl Night,** free appetizers at Paris Decatur. www.paris-decatur.com	**JAN. 13** **'Hairspray'** opens at Cobb Energy Centre. cobbenergycentre.com	**JAN. 14** **PALS Bingo** 'Follow the Yellow Brick Road' at Jungle. palsatlanta.org **Exploring Genders** through Reading at Charis. charisbooksandmore.com	**JAN. 15** **MLK Weekend** activities begin. inthelifeatl.com **'L-Word' Premiere party** at Jungle. atlanta.hrc.org **Lady Bunny** in 'Veranda' at Ansley Park. ansleyparkplayhouse.com	**JAN. 16** **'Cirque du Soiree'** at Bellissima. myspace.com/bellissima_lounge **Doggies on the Catwalk** for PALS. palsatlanta.org **'The Restoration'** at Lowe Gallery. lowegallery.com	**JAN. 17** **Celine Dion** at Phillips Arena. philipsarena.com **Studio 54** at Jungle. **DJ Hector Fonseca** at Heretic. www.hereticatlanta.com
JAN. 18 **Armorette's 30th Anniversary.** www.armorettes.com	**JAN. 19** **Monday Night Football** at Joe's on Juniper. www.joesonjuniper.com	**JAN. 20** **AGLCC Lunch** at Roxx. atlantagaychamber.org **Showtunes and dinner specials at Amsterdam.** amsterdam-atlanta.com	**JAN. 21** **Out & Equal Atlanta: Together We Can** Meeting. www.outandequal.org/affiliates/Atlanta	**JAN. 22** **NAESM National African American MSM Leadership Conference.** naesmonline.org Varla Jean Merman in 'Shut Up, Sweet Charlotte.' 14thstreetplayhouse.com	**JAN. 23** **'Were the World Mine'** movie opens at Midtown Art. landmarktheater.com **Phillip Glass' "Akhnaten'** opens at the Atlanta Opera. www.atlantaopera.org	**JAN. 24** **DJ Oren Nizri** at Jungle. **'For the Bible Tells Me So'** screening at Unitarian Universalist. www.uuca.org **Family planning** for gay couples. megafamilyproject.org
JAN. 25 **'Erotic Sundays'** Hip hop and R&B at Club Europe. www.clubeurope.net	**JAN. 26** **Outreach Initiative** black gay youth drop-in hours at AID Atlanta. www.aidatlanta.org	**JAN. 27** **E. Lynn Harris** at Outwrite. www.outwritebooks.com **'Stomp!'** opens at the Fox. www.foxtheatre.org	**JAN. 28** **Gay Fathers of Atlanta** at Atlanta-Fulton library. www.gfoatlanta.org **Queer Literary Fiction book group** at Charis. charisbooksandmore.com	**JAN. 29** **Line-dance lessons** at 3-Legged Cowboy. www.3leggedcowboy.net	**JAN. 30** **Dancing Monkey Cabaret** 'New Year, New World' at Aurora Theatre. dancingmonkeycabaret.com	**JAN. 31** **Stage Door Divas** and **Tuckerettes** at Stage Door. www.stagedoor.biz
FEB. 1 **Gay yoga classes** at Jai Shanti. www.jaishantiyoga.com	**FEB. 2** **Video Request Night** at Amsterdam. amsterdam-atlanta.com	**FEB. 3** **Wii with Dee** at Felix's on the Square. 404-249-7899	**FEB. 4** **Pride Bowling** at 300 Atlanta. 770-451-8605	**FEB. 5** **'Dracula'** at the Atlanta Ballet. www.atlantaballet.com	**FEB. 6** **New York Gay Ski Week** with Social Atlanta. www.socialatl.com	**FEB. 7** **National Freedom to Marry Day.** www.freedomtomarry.org **'Freedom to Marry'** documentary at Unitarian Universalist. www.uuca.org

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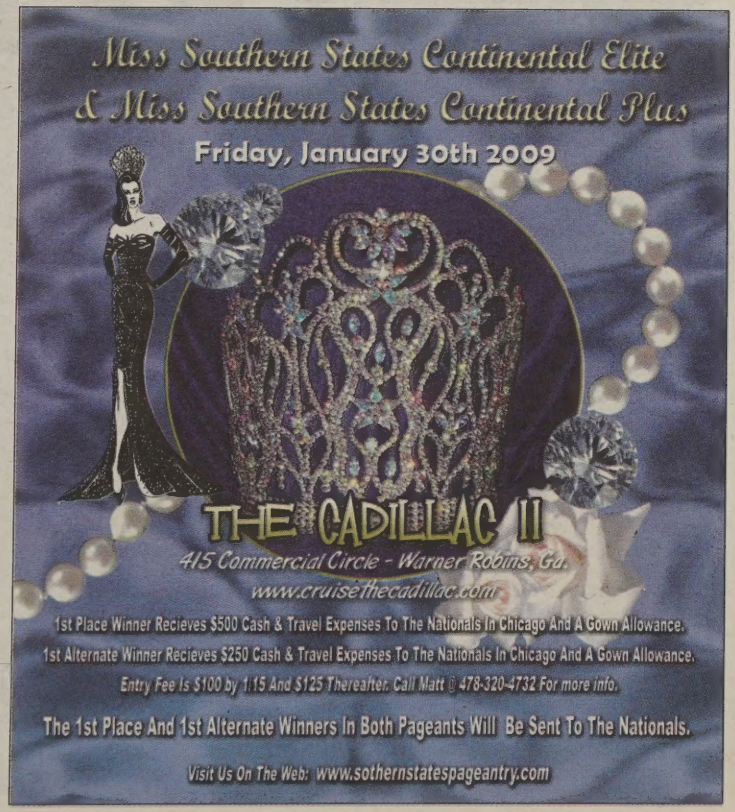
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PAID iN BLOOD

Artist Robert Sherer creates college scholarship, addresses gay business group

By RYAN LEE
rlee@sovo.com

The work of artist and professor **Robert Sherer** includes acclaimed works drawn in blood. Sherer recently created a scholarship for gay art students. (Sherer photo by William Cash; artwork courtesy Sherer)

WHILE YOUNG GAY PEOPLE ARE NOW ABLE TO come out to their parents with increasing ease, Kennesaw State University art professor Robert Sherer knows that many gay art students still struggle to gain full acceptance from their families.

"Just about every semester of being a university professor, I have students who come to me who tell me their parents are disowning them because they've chosen to pursue a career as an artist," Sherer says.

Parents of gay and straight art students alike often urge their children to focus on fields that will provide them a "real paycheck," but Sherer, who is gay, says "the gay students really get the double-whammy."

Hoping to alleviate the multiple layers of stress that such students shoulder, Sherer is creating an endowed scholarship for gay, lesbian and transgender art students at KSU.

He plans plans to raise $20,000 over the next four years to start the scholarship and expects much of the seed money to come in small donations.

"It's a really grassroots effort," Sherer says.

Other funding is expected from a university website that sells Sherer's famed series of "Blood Works," which incorporate HIV-positive blood used as ink.

Sherer, who speaks at the Jan. 15 meeting of the Atlanta Executive Network, a gay business group, wants to give students faith that they can earn a living as artists, particularly in a city like Atlanta.

"Atlanta's a great city for emerging artists," Sherer says. "We probably have over 100 art venues in Atlanta — everywhere from the bohemian type exhibition spaces to the blue-chip galleries in Buckhead. If you do a couple of shows for friends, there's lots of opportunities to climb the ladder."

SOUTHERN VOICE
scene

DESPITE GROWING UP IN RURAL ALABAMA, Sherer fortunately never suffered from a lack of familial support surrounding his sexual orientation and artistic ambitions. After arriving in Atlanta in the late 1970s, Sherer plunged into the gay and arts scene as a budding activist and student at the Atlanta College of Art and at Georgia State University.

It wasn't long before Sherer's penchants for art and gay politics began to coalesce. After graduating from Georgia State in the mid-'80s, he moved northeast to pursue a master's degree.

While at Edinboro University in Pennsylvania, Sherer was invited to include his master's thesis in an exhibit on the human figure at a college outside of Cleveland., Sherer put his twist on classic nude paintings by replacing the female subjects with men. The works were stripped from the walls and locked in a basement vault.

Sherer continued painting male nudes, and although none of his work was overtly provocative, it continued to expose society's discomfort with the material.

Several more censorship episodes — including a North Carolina museum deeming Sherer's work "not appropriate for the town" — helped catapult the young gay painter to the forefront of contemporary visual art.

Sherer moved back to Atlanta in the early '90s to assume a leadership position at the Lowe Gallery in Buckhead. He has continued to receive acclaim for his cutting-edge work. He represented the U.S. in the Triennale de Paris in 2002, and at the Florence Biennale in Florence, Italy, in 2001 and 2007.

"His works from the very beginning were very progressive and were censored, and he always been an advocate and activist for the community," says Justin Ziegler, president of AEN.

SHERER'S PRESENTATION AT AEN WILL INCLUDE an overview of his 25 years as an artist. Sherer's career is bookended by his early period of male nudes and his current work doing electric drawings on pieces of wood, which he traces back to his scouting days.

"I was never really that good at sports, but I won lots of merit badges at camp crafts," Sherer says.

The middle era of Sherer's career is perhaps his most groundbreaking, as it was defined by his use of HIV-positive blood in elaborate line drawings.

In the late '90s, Sherer accidentally cut himself with an X-Acto blade and grabbed a jar to contain the blood.

"I decided, after I got myself cleaned up, to try to draw with it," he says.

Mesmerized by the colors the blood created, Sherer began to think about life and love in the age of AIDS, which inspired him to create an entire line of "Blood Works."

The subjects range from the spiritual to the serene, such as two bunnies huddled together. Flowers are also a strong theme in the series. Such innocent images may help people deal with their fears surrounding HIV/AIDS.

"People will see a painting from across the room, and they'll see a pretty flower, art that is safe and antiseptic," Sherer says. "Then they'll read the placard and see that it was painted with HIV-positive blood. A lot of times, they'll take several steps back because that immediate feeling hits them of, 'This is dangerous.'

"Then they have a chance to process it — it's dried blood, it's behind a case — and their fears go away," says Sherer, who has used a life-threatening element to create art, and is now using it to give life to generations of gay art students.

Robert Sherer
Atlanta Executive Network
Jan. 15, 5:45 p.m.
Trois, 1180 Peachtree St.
$20 for non-members,
404-529-4584, www.aen.org
www.kennesaw.edu/arts/bloodworks

'Hairspray,' Page 20 • 'L-Word' premiere party, Page 23 • Lady Bunny in 'Veranda,' Page 25

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Cirque du Soleil takes trip to circuses past

Clowns in 'Kooza.' (Photo courtesy Cirque du Soleil)

The age-old excitement when we hear the phrase "when the circus comes to town" may double when the troupe is Cirque du Soleil. Atlanta seems to buzz even before the performances open, when freeway drivers first see the blue and yellow stripes of the big-top go up, and word spreads quickly.

The latest touring Cirque show, "Kooza," runs now through Feb. 22 at Atlantic Station. It not only brings up old feelings for some visitors, but this show in particular also brings a distinct nod to two longtime circus traditions.

"Kooza" combines the acrobatic performances the troupe is known for with a focus on clowning. It promises an emphasis on bold, colorful, slapstick humor.

"The show highlights the physical demands of human performance in all its splendor and fragility," says Nicholas Wolover, an Atlanta spokesperson for Cirque du Soleil.

SOVO SOUTHERN VOICE SCENE IN BRIEF

Sounds like the energy beneath the "Grand Chapiteau" ("big top" in Cirque-speak) apparently lives up to the vigor with which Atlanta anticipates each new incarnation of this distinctly different circus troupe.

– Mike Fleming

Cirque du Soleil: 'Kooza'
Through Feb. 22
Tuesdays through Thursdays, 8 p.m.
Fridays and Saturdays, 4 p.m. and 8 p.m.
Sundays, 1 p.m. and 5 p.m.
Atlantic Station
800-678-5440, www.cirquedusoleil.com

'Hairspray' returns to Atlanta at Cobb Centre

What started as the most mainstream of quirky gay filmmaker John Waters' movies — that is to say, still way left of center — is now among the biggest hits in middle America of all time: "Hairspray: The Musical."

All it took was a remake, or two.

When the talents that populate Broadway latch onto almost any show, theme or concept, they can turn it into a musical and gentrify it enough for any grandma in Topeka and put the show on tour. Take Waters' skewering of race relations in 1960s Baltimore, throw in some production numbers, more music you can tap your toes to, put some distance between audiences and the actual horrors of the era as well as Waters' bawdier humor, and you have a hit.

Inspire Hollywood to make a movie out of that starring John Travolta and Michelle Pfeiffer, call it "Hairspray: The Movie," then all that's left is to put it on a never-ending tour across America. The touring production of "Hairspray: The Musical" returns to Atlanta at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre Jan. 13 – 18 courtesy of the Atlanta Broadway Series.

For those of you who've been under a rock, the show is the story of Tracy Turnblad, a big girl with big hair and an even bigger heart who dances her way onto a teen show and into the life of her crush, heartthrob Link Larkin. Through tenacity and sass, she takes down the reigning beauty queen and racially integrates the show without denting her 'do.

All sniping aside from those who appreciate Waters' original "Hairspray," the show really is fun and does carry some major credits under its belt. It won eight 2003 Tony Awards, including Best Musical, and is in its fifth year on Broadway. And what's wrong with a little toe-tapping?

– Mike Fleming

'Hairspray: The Musical'
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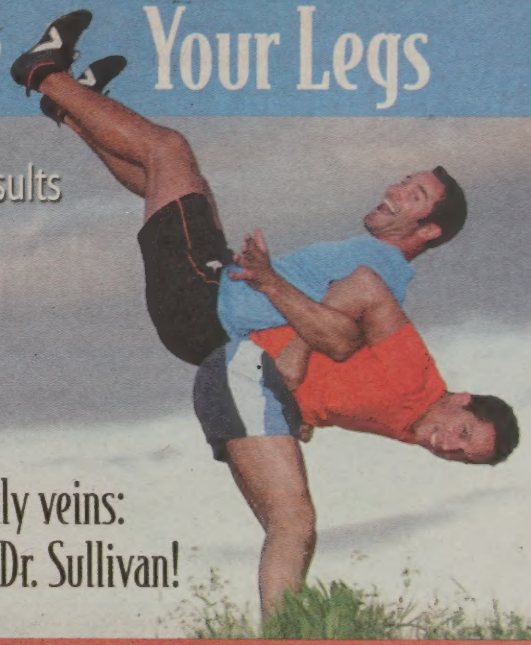

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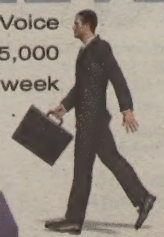

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Lesbian drama

ATL party for season premiere of 'The L Word' expects huge crowd

By DYANA BAGBY
dbagby@sovo.com

The sixth and final season of 'The L Word' kicks off with a Jan. 15 Atlanta viewing of the season opener. (Photo courtesy Showtime)

CLOSE TO 800 LESBIANS — AS WELL AS A few gay men and transgender people — are expected to pack the Wild Mustang/Jungle on Jan. 15 for the Atlanta final season premiere of "The L Word."

The popular Showtime series that follows a group of Los Angeles lesbians as they maneuver through rocky relationships, baby mama drama and, well, some very sexy hookups has garnered a faithful following, especially in Atlanta.

"This year, we're opening the doors at 4 p.m. so people can get in early," says Brad Williams, owner of the Wild Mustang/Jungle.

"We usually hit capacity," he says. "In the past, we've had people lined up around the block waiting to get in an hour before the party.

"My life has been threatened by women afraid they weren't going to get in, so we are suggesting people arrive early," he laughs.

DOORS OFFICIALLY OPEN AT 7 P.M. WITH THE screening set to start at 8 p.m. After the viewing, there will be an after party featuring DJ Vicki Powell.

In the past, cast members such as Pam Grier as well as creator Ilene Chaiken have visited Atlanta to partake in the preview parties. This year, however, no cast members will join in on the fun here or in the other 25 cities holding "L Word" premiere parties.

"No cast members are going to any of the events this year, unfortunately," said Rachel Balick, spokersperson for the Human Rights Campaign. HRC is a sponsor of the event.

"We've been a partner with Showtime for all six seasons, and 'The L Word' basically spreads awareness of LGBT life — plus it's good entertainment," Balick says. "These events are a chance to unite the community and are wildly popular. We're happy to be partners and give something back."

The party also serves as a fundraiser for HRC, and the gay rights organization asks for a $10 suggested donation.

THE FINAL SEASON BEGINS WITH A BANG as Jenny (Mia Kirshner), the character everyone loves to hate, is found dead and all her friends are suspects. For Kate Bishop, an Atlanta lesbian who watched the show since the first season, there is no love lost with Jenny gone.

Final season premiere of 'The L Word'
Jan. 15; doors open at 4 p.m.
The Wild Mustang/Jungle
2115 Faulkner Road
www.hrc.org/lword
http://www.myspace.com/jungle_bradwilliams

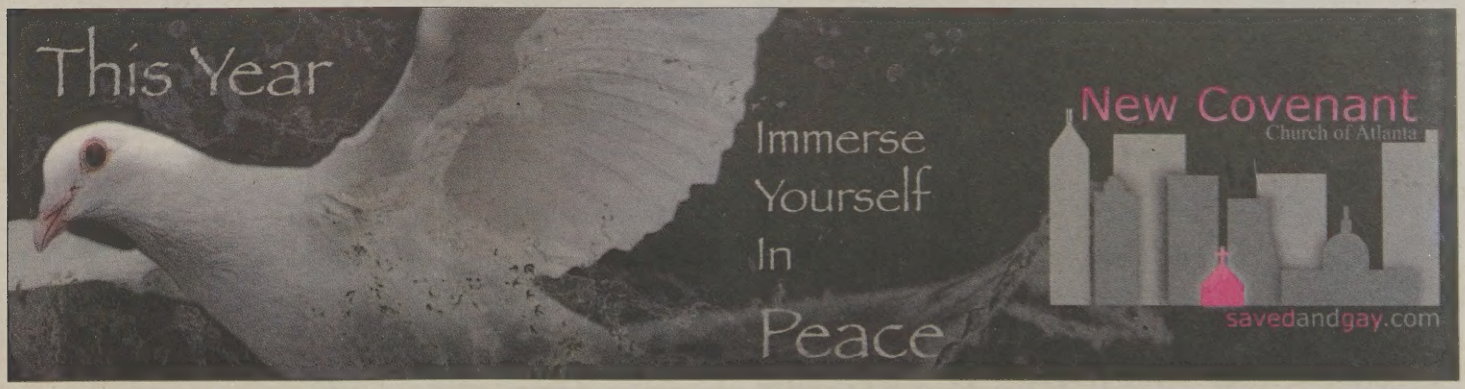
"I despised her character the most, so her absence will not be noticed," Bishop says.

And while the lesbian lives played out on "The L Word" — with their glamorous jobs, great hair and trendy outfits — rarely serve as insight into what life is like for real lesbians, the show broke ground by making lesbians the main characters who do deal with real-life issues.

"I am glad that this is the last season of 'The L Word,'" Bishop says. "I think the writing has not been very good ever since Season 2. It never really encompassed a realistic angle towards the lesbian community. The show has almost become campy.

"[But] I like that the show included a lot of strong actors/actresses who clearly are very supportive of the gay community."

Katherine Moennig (left) and **Mia Kirshner** in the final season of 'The L Word.' (Photo courtesy Showtime)



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The Tramp is a lady

Bawdy drag star Lady Bunny takes on the role of a preacher's wife

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JIM FARMER

WHEN LADY BUNNY JOINS THE CAST OF "VERANDA 2" next week, it's a return home to the South for the bawdy drag goddess. Known for her high blonde hair and her naughty routines, Bunny takes over the role of Charity Divine in the second of the "Veranda" trilogy of comedies from gay writers John Gibson and Anthony Morris.

Charity is a preacher's wife who has recently adopted a baby overseas and thinks she is actually pregnant. The role is regularly played by local drag personality Bubba D. Licious in this production. Charity's husband is minister to the show's main character, who is running for Christian of the Wear while she plans her son's gay wedding. The show, written several years ago, gets new life in the current climate of controversy surrounding gay marriage.

Lady Bunny arrived in town on Jan. 8 and is rehearsing for a week before making her debut in the role.

BUNNY GREW UP IN CHATTANOOGA AND MOVED to Atlanta in 1982, where she befriended DJ and music promoter Larry Tee. While here, she was roommates with RuPaul.

"I remember Atlanta and the club scene here was so much fun," she says.

It was around that time that Lady Bunny began to find her calling. She found some acting roles but soon decided to take her career into her own hands, adopting her drag persona.

"I was a sissy who had been pretending to be straight all my life," she says. With the wig on, Lady Bunny was born. "I love it — you can be your own director, your own choreographer, your own star."

When she moved to New York City, she was instrumental in starting Wigstock, one of the world's biggest drag celebrations. The project started off very modestly with a group of friends, but grew into a major New York happening. In 1995, the feature-length documentary "Wigstock: The Movie" chronicled the rise of the event and sent Lady Bunny's star rising higher. Wigstock hasn't been held since 2005, but this year marks the 25th anniversary.

EVEN BY HER OWN TERMS, LADY BUNNY HAD A busy 2008. Besides her various nightclub acts, her snippy fashion contributions to "Star" magazine and her popular website/blog, she was seen in the film "Another Gay Sequel" and was one of the co-hosts for the GayVNs, the Oscars of gay porn.

She and RuPaul were reunited on the set of "Another Gay Sequel" and remembered what made them friends originally.

"We both have a sick sense of humor," Lady Bunny says.

Ironically, Lady Bunny shared the stage with Bubba D. Licious back in 2004 at the Divas Rock Atlanta event featuring Deborah Gibson, Deborah Cox and Martha Washington.

"We hit it off like the Southern queens that we are," Lady Bunny laughs. "We spent time backstage complaining about how sore our feet were."

The performer says the character of Charity, which she and Bubba share, will suit her.

"I like the fact that she is colorful and has crazy costumes and gets to chew the scenery," she says. "I am very excited about it. What I love about doing 'Veranda 2' is that my parents can come see it."

Much of her material is not suitable for all audiences, but this show, as well as its geographical convenience, make her family's attendance appropriate, she says.

While in Atlanta, Lady Bunny jokes that she wants to go to Swinging Richards, but her top priority is getting the character and the show down. She also plans to have dinner with Charlie Brown.

"She got in touch with me via MySpace, and we are going to meet up. She is drag royalty. " Bunny says, noting that it would be even better to get old-school legend Lily White there as well.

Former Atlanta resident and New York drag phenom **Lady Bunny** steps into the role of the preacher's wife for a limited time in the ongoing play 'Veranda 2.' (Photo by David Shankbone/AP)

'Veranda 2'
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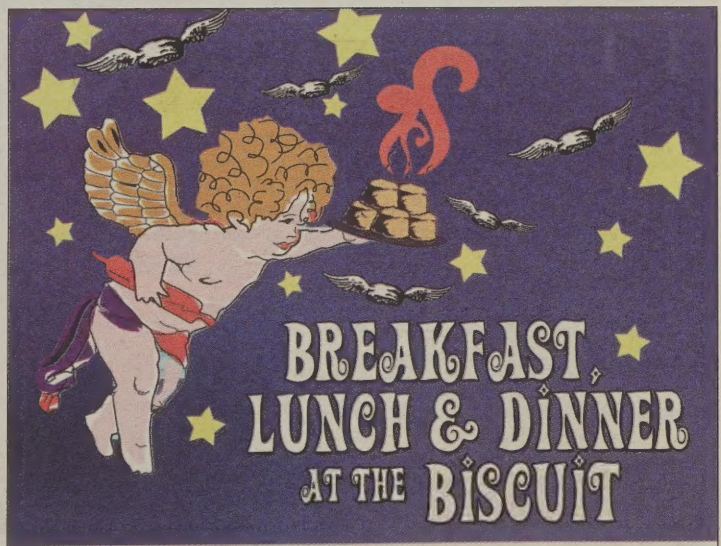

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Wine basics

Why oak, and what the heck is tannin?

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IF WE ARE GOING TO TURN YOU INTO A WINE EXPERT this year, there are a few things that you should know. Nothing too difficult, just a few terms and a couple of explanations about why things are the way they are in the wine world. Why do winemakers do what they do, and why does the wine they make tastes the way it does?

Don't worry, we'll still let you know which wines to order from a restaurant wine list and what to serve when entertaining, but we also want you to understand what you're drinking and to be able to express what you like and dislike about the wines you drink. Think of it as a free wine class.

One of the biggest decisions a winemaker makes is in regard to how oak is used. Oak can impart many different elements to both aroma and mouth-feel in a wine, and it can be applied in different methods to control the amount of influence it has.

The two most important kinds of oak used in winemaking are American and French. On the whole, American oak is considered to be more flavorful, but it can also be a bit assertive. French oak is thought to be a touch more subtle, but it is higher in wood tannins, which can taste bitter and have a drying sensation in the mouth.

The next time you're in the grocery store, peel the skin off of a red grape and bite into it. That astringent, bitter taste is tannin. You will also notice the distinct dry feeling and the sensation that something is coating your teeth. All of that is tannin.

THE NEXT QUESTION IS, "WHY WOULD A WINE-maker add tannins to the wine if tannins taste bitter and astringent?" Tannins add a level of complexity to the texture of a wine, as well as protect the wine from oxidation. Tannins found in grapes are proanthocyanidins, a class of flavanols shown to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and have a beneficial effect on vascular health.

Tannins also come as a package with some other very beneficial elements in wine. They are found in the skin, seeds and stems of the grapes. Because the skins also contain the color that makes red wine red (the juice of virtually all grapes is clear), as the winemaker macerates the juice on the skins, tannins are extracted with the color pigments.

As the winemaker ages wine in oak barrels, the beneficial flavors of vanilla, caramel, coffee, spice and chocolate are released by the wood as well as wood tannin. The winemaker must manage a fine balance between the benefits and the potential influence that tannins will have in the finished wine. A wine that is too tannic can be out of balance, and the tannins can overpower other aspects of the wine.

Softer fruit flavors can be lost to the astringency of harsh tannins.

TANNINS CAN BE CONTROLLED TO A CERTAIN extent. As a bottle ages over time, tannin molecules will bond together and form long silky chains, or group together until they are too heavy to stay suspended in liquid and fall away as sediment.

Oxygen also helps the tannin molecules bind together and make softer rounder molecules. That is why tannic young red wines benefit from being decanted: not only is oxygen mixed into the wine as it is poured into the decanter, but a greater area of wine has access to oxygen than in would in a narrow bottle. Swirling the wine in your glass also helps to mix oxygen into the wine.

Certain grapes are more tannic than others. Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Nebiollo and Tannat are the four most tannic grapes. That is also why wines made from these grapes are very age worthy.

It can take years for the tannins in some of these wines to mellow and come into balance with other elements of the wine. And that is what we are ultimately searching for — a wine that is in balance, a wine that has equal parts aroma, flavor, structure and texture. The ultimate experience for the wine lover in all of us.

Wine aged in American Oak barrels is said to be more flavorful than French Oak, but may create a taste that is too aggressive for some. (Photo via stonehillwinery.com)

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Spandex scandal

'Gladiator' fesses up to juice abuse

Dan Clark, aka 'Nitro' (Book cover from Simon & Schuster)

dish
There's a Fine Line Between Telling the Truth and Talking Trash

Dish isn't one to spread rumors. But we must admit we are guilty of once suggesting, ever so casually, that the cast of "American Gladiators" may partake in the consumption of steroids.

Blasphemy! Slander! To say such things without proof! This means, of course, that we also admit to actually watching "American Gladiators," which does not make us proud. But this was back in the '90s — you know, when the show was good.

Thank the Goddess, Dish is finally vindicated: **DAN CLARK**, the hunk who portrayed **"NITRO"** in the original incarnation of the show, penned a tell-all memoir, "Gladiator: A True Story of 'Roids, Rage and Redemption."

He claims he was addicted to steroids for 20 years, including during his tenure on the show, and his abuse of the juice caused gynecomastia — otherwise known as "man boobs" — which had to be strapped down with a specially rigged uniform.

He also claims he experienced a permanent "shriveling" and experiences a "dull, throbbing pain" whenever he has sex. Hot.

'Real World' has its gay and eats trans too

JD from 'Real World' (Photo by AP)

Speaking of shows that were better in the '90s, "The Real World" is back for yet another season, filming in New York for the third time (this time, Brooklyn). This season features eight roommates, instead of the customary seven; one is gay (**JD**) and one is trans (**KATELYNN**).

The show's theme this year was to encourage the housemates to "go after their dreams" and find exciting jobs in the big city.

JD and Katelynn chose to volunteer for New York's gay community center, along with another roommate named Sarah who's straight. But who has time to work? Rumor has it the lovely JD was a very busy boy in the romance department, energetically on the rebound after a relationship with a certain closeted TV news personality.

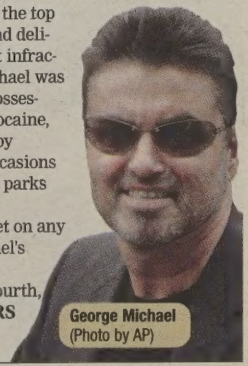
George Michael likely for 'first arrest' of the year

The bookies at William Hill, a prestigious betting agency in the UK, have announced their contenders for the "first celebrity to be arrested in 2009." Among their top picks: Dish's most favorite mess on legs, **GEORGE MICHAEL**.

The odds are in Michael's favor — he places third on the list, behind ex-convict **PETE DOHERTY** and rehab-worthy **AMY WINEHOUSE**. But Dish thinks Winehouse is in greater danger of dropping dead than getting thrown in jail.

Regardless, we have our hopes set on Michael for the top prize, as he has a long and delicious list of unrepentant infractions. Most recently, Michael was arrested in August for possession of marijuana and cocaine, and he has been caught by paparazzi on multiple occasions traipsing through public parks under the influence.t.

Should you wish to bet on any impending arrest, Michael's odds pay 9-2. **NAOMI CAMPBELL** is a close fourth, at 8-1; **BRITNEY SPEARS** is a long shot, at 33-1.



George Michael (Photo by AP)

Send comments, suggestions to **Dish@sovo.com**

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GAY MARRIAGE IN BLACK & WHITE

Despite support from civil rights icons, African-American opposition remains strong

Page 11

Election results: Keisha Waites one step closer to joining list of gay legislators. Page 4

Straight talk: E. Lynn Harris on the unexpected twist in his new novel. Page 23

Joining Hearts: DJ Roland Belmares spins for summer's hottest party with a purpose. Page 25

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SOUTHERN VOICE

JULY 18 - JULY 24, 2008

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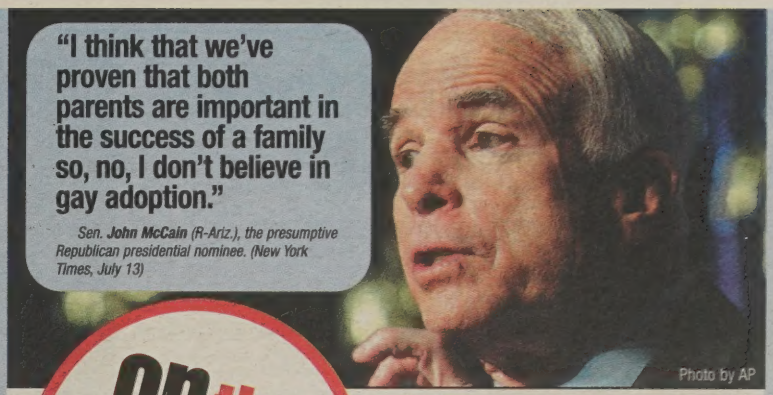


"I think that we've proven that both parents are important in the success of a family so, no, I don't believe in gay adoption."

*Sen. **John McCain** (R-Ariz.), the presumptive Republican presidential nominee. (New York Times, July 13)*

Photo by AP

on the record

"The vast majority — more than 75 percent — of American households differ in structure from two married, heterosexual parents and their biological children. We are a nation of blended and multi-generational families, adoptive and foster families, and families headed by single parents, divorced parents, unmarried parents, same-sex couples and more. As an adoptive parent himself, McCain should be well aware of this. As a presidential candidate, he should seek to honor and support the many kinds of families that exist, rather than dismiss the vast majority of households in this country as second-tier."

Kara Suffredini, public policy director for the Family Equality Council, responding to McCain. (Pam's House Blend, pamshousblend.com, July 14)

"I don't see how anybody could celebrate his career. Everything he did was such a disservice to this state."

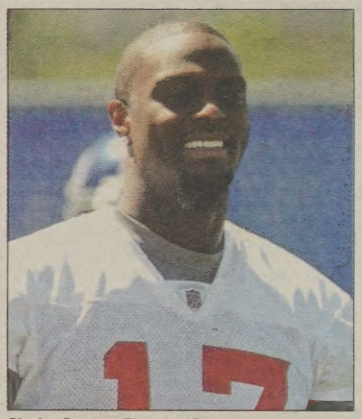
L.F. Eason III, director of North Carolina's Standards Laboratory, who chose to retire rather than comply with an order from the governor for state flags to fly at half-staff to honor the late Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) Helms was an ardent gay rights foe and segregationist. Eason denounced him for having a "doctrine of negativity, hate and prejudice." (Associated Press, July 9)

"I don't know if Kordell is gay or not. It was none of our business. If ever we would have talked about it, it would have made everybody uncomfortable. If some player was gay, I don't think he could come out while he was still playing. It would be real hard. It would mess a team up mentally and it wouldn't be good for that person."

*Giants receiver **Plaxico Burress** in his new book, "Giant: The Road To The Super Bowl," on rumors about NFL quarterback Kordell Stewart when the two played together in Pittsburgh. (ProFootballTalk.com, July 9)*

"We were having women going in to take photos of the stall and men were in there using it."

Patrick Hogan, public affairs director for the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, on the restroom stall where Sen. Larry Craig (R-Idaho) was arrested for soliciting sex from a male undercover cop. Hogan reports the airport has no plans to close the restroom during the Republican National Convention, which will be held in St. Paul later this summer. (Chicago Sun-Times, July 7)



Plaxico Burress (Photo by AP)

Katy Perry (Photo by AP)

"The fact of the matter is that girls, a lot of the time, smell much better than boys. We smell like vanilla. We smell like watermelon. We smell like strawberries. So, duh! One day I was with my boyfriend and I opened up a magazine and realised, 'You know what, honey, I would probably make out with Angelina Jolie if she wanted to.'"

***Katy Perry**, the former Christian singer whose hit song 'I Kissed a Girl' reached No. 1 on the The Billboard Hot 100. (The Observer, July 6)*

"I can say we've got several shows now moving forward with gay characters in them. … In fact, right now we're in production on a pilot called 'Virtuality' … It's got a gay relationship that is as dimensional and honest as anything I've ever seen portrayed on television right now. If we move forward on that I think that is something to really note."

Fox Entertainment President Kevin Reilly, responding to a question about his network again placing last in the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation's Network Responsibility Index, which measures portrayals of gay characters on television. (AfterElton.com, July 14)

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AP Associated Press

Lesbian candidate advances to Georgia House runoff

Gay activist loses Senate bid from Savannah

By MATT SCHAFER
mschafer@sovo.com

Keisha Waites made it to an Aug. 5 runoff after taking second in a crowded field for House District 61 while **Kevin Clark** lost his bid for state Senate District 2. (File photos)

Keisha Waites is one step closer to making history as she enters a runoff for state House District 61, after finishing second by a handful of votes behind her closest rival, Ralph Long III.

With absentee and provisional ballots left to be counted, Waites and Long appeared to be in a dead heat ahead of the rest of a six-person field racing to replace long term Rep. Bob Holmes (D-Atlanta). With 83 percent of precincts reporting at press time, Waites had garnered 916 votes for 34.5 percent of the vote to Long's 962 votes, or 36.2 percent.

"I don't like to call it a win, I think it's the first step toward victory," Waites said. "We have made a decision we are not celebrating anything until we seal the deal."

Waites would be the second lesbian elected to the state legislature, and Georgia's first openly gay African-American state lawmaker. She will face Long again on Aug. 5 in a runoff. Long and Waites easily outdistanced Daniel A. Blackman, Edith Ladipo, Paul Lockhart Sr. and Tony M.L. McCann.

Long was one of the first to announce his campaign and said he is happy to pull within a few votes of Waites, who he considered the frontrunner due to her previous campaigning in the area that includes parts of East Point and southwest Atlanta.

"I'm very pleased that I was very able to do at least par with her. And that was due to the efforts to my wife and my supporters," he said.

Both candidates boast similar backgrounds in the housing industry, Waites as a former mortgage broker and Long as a real estate broker. And both want to address transportation, foreclosures and economic development in District 61.

Georgia Equality endorsed Waites for the first time this year after she ran five previous unsuccessful campaigns.

"She's been running a good campaign and she's reaching the people who are likely to vote," said Allen Thornell, interim political director of Georgia Equality.

Currently Waites and Georgia Equality are in discussions to determine how to support her in the runoff. During the primary, Thornell helped steer donors to Waites and GE volunteers did some phone banking for her.

Long said he is a supporter of gay rights and regrets not having the chance to compete for the endorsement of the state's largest gay political group.

"I know I'm going to pay a price for that, especially with the conservative people in my neighborhood," Long said of supporting gay rights. "We have bigger issues than trying to get into someone's house and figure out what's going on with them."

While Georgia Equality typically sends out questionnaires to determine who the organization will support, Thornell said they don't always follow that procedure. In races where a candidate like Waites has a history with the organization, Georgia Equality will sometimes endorse without issuing a questionnaire to all of the competitors.

With three weeks before the Aug. 5 runoff, both sides need to consolidate their support. Waites is working to expand and diversify her campaign while looking to the traditional gay support network for additional help.

"We're going to reach out to every-

Please see **SENATE** on **Page 5**

Primary races of note

• **Senate District 6:** Hunter Hill took three fourths of the vote in the Republican Primary in a district that had been held by Sen. Doug Stoner (D-Smyrna). Stoner, who changed his vote on the 2004 constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, helping it to pass the legislature, is considered safe, but Hill has raised an impressive amount of money.

• **Senate District 36:** Sen. Nan Orrock (D-Atlanta) won a commanding 71 percent to 28 percent victory against Andre Jerry. This district includes the eastern side of Midtown and Morningside. Orrock has been one of the loudest and strongest allies for gay rights inside the Georgia General Assembly.

• **Senate District 50:** In a surprise, state Sen. Nancy Schaefer (R-Turnerville) will go into a runoff for her seat as an underdog after coming in second behind Jim Butterworth, 40 percent to 37.5 percent. While neither Butterworth nor Schaefer support gay issues, some believe gay legislation may be less of a priority for Butterworth.

• **House District 59:** Georgia Equality-endorsed Rep. Margaret Kaiser (D-Atlanta) took 70 percent of the vote against challenger Chris Vaughn. This district includes parts of Midtown south of Piedmont Park.

• **House District 81:** Chris Huttman beat Cecillia Hailey in the Democratic primary as he took 68 percent of the vote. Huttman will challenge Rep. Jill Chambers (R-Atlanta), one of two Republicans endorsed by the Atlanta chapter of the gay Log Cabin Republicans, and the only House Republican to vote against the 2004 constitutional amendment banning gay marriage.

• **House District 93:** Rep. Dee Dawkins-Haigler (D-Lithonia), endorsed by Georgia Equality, will face Malik Douglas in a runoff for the second time in three months. Endorsed by Georgia Equality, Dawkins-Haigler won a special election runoff against Douglas to replace former Rep. Ron Sailor (D-Lithonia) in June and will now face him in a general election runoff on Aug. 5.

• **House District 94:** Rep. Randal Mangham (D-Decatur) trounced challenger Andrew Bostick by taking almost 80 percent of the vote. Mangham voted for the 2004 constitutional amendment.

— Matt Schafer

Gay voter **Jeremy Burnette** (left) congratulates **Jim Martin**, now in a runoff with DeKalb County CEO Vernon Jones to win the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate. (Photo by Matt Schafer)

Gay allies advance in federal races

Martin, Lewis receive strong support from gay voters

By MATT SCHAFER
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Long-term gay allies Jim Martin and U.S. Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.) July 15 as Lewis easily recaptured his Congressional seat despite facing two opponents and Martin forced a runoff with DeKalb County CEO Vernon Jones for the Democratic nomination to the U.S. Senate.

Lewis turned back challenges from state Rep. "Able" Mable Thomas (D-Atlanta) and newcomer and community activist Rev. Markel Hutchins as the incumbent took 69 percent of the vote in the district he has held since 1986. There is no Republican challenger on the Nov. 4 ballot.

"I'm telling you we have won a great victory, not just a victory for John Lewis, but a victory for the people of the 5th Congressional district," he told supporters at his victory party in Castleberry Hill July 15. "I'm going back to Washington early in the morning. I go back to continue to work because there is a great deal of work left to be done."

Lewis is a strong supporter of gay marriage and other gay civil rights issues. (See related story, page 11). While he did not specifically name gay rights in his victory speech, he did make a plea for equal rights.

"We must continue to treat every human being as a human being. We must treat people with dignity and with respect," Lewis said. "We must do what we can to create what I call the one community, one family, one house."

SENATE RUNOFF The Senate race played out as many political pundits expected, with Martin and Jones ending up with the most votes at 34 and 40 percent respectively. Former TV investigative reporter Dale Cardwell garnered 15 percent of the vote, while self-proclaimed outsiders Rand Knight and Josh Lanier received less than 10 percent. Knight and Lanier were the only candidates in the race who support gay marriage.

Martin and Jones will now face off in an Aug. 5 runoff election. Martin, who held his victory party at the Park Tavern in Midtown, likely benefited from his 18 years as

Please see **FEDERAL** on **Page 5**

Clark 'full of joy' despite primary loss

SENATE, continued from **Page 4**

one, and certainly Midtown infrastructure is something that we are looking to for help," Waites said. "We're looking to reach out inside the district and across the state. We are running an inclusive campaign."

Both candidates have a similar style of campaigning. Long and Waites are walking the district going door-to-door looking for votes. They are both open to a debate, but have not scheduled one before the runoff.

Georgia Equality board member Kevin Clark finished last in a three-person race for state Senate District 2, which was left open when Sen. Regina Thomas (D-Savannah) left to challenge U.S. Rep. John Barrow for the 12th Congressional District.

"I'm full of joy," Clark said. "It is obviously not the result I intended. I intended to force a runoff and that clearly didn't happen.

"This was a groundbreaking campaign in so many ways, the first [openly gay man] running [for state office] outside of Atlanta, the first to run for a Senate district in the state," he added.

Rep. Lester Jackson (D-Savannah) was able to parlay the political machine he developed in almost 10 years in the state House and took 70 percent of the vote against Bettye Anne Battiste, who garnered 19 percent, and Clark, who received 10 percent.

As he drove around the district removing his campaign signs July 16, Clark said he is already considering his future options. He said he is exploring creating a public information foundation and would not rule out running for office again, potentially against Jackson in two years.

State Rep. Karla Drenner (D-Avondale Estates), the first and currently only openly gay member of the General Assembly, did not face opposition this year.

Martin, Jones battle for Senate spot

FEDERAL, continued from **Page 4**

Midtown's state representative before he was appointed by then-Gov. Roy Barnes as commissioner of the Georgia Department of Human Resources in 2001.

Both Martin and Jones told Southern Voice they are against gay marriage. Martin supports civil unions for gay couples, while Jones said he would need to see specific legislation.

"Whoever you decide you want as your partner is your business, and everyone should have access to job opportunity, housing, that's your rights as a citizen," he told Southern Voice last year.

Martin also supports the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, repealing the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, and expanding federal hate crimes laws to include sexual orientation and gender identity. Jones declined to take a position on the military policy, and said he was unsure about ENDA, although he opposes job discrimination based on sexual orientation. He also said he would need to study the language of the hate crimes law.

In other contested Congressional primaries:

- **District 8:** Freshman lawmaker Rep. Jim Marshall (D-Macon) received 83 percent of the vote to defeat teacher Robert Nowak (D-Macon). The Human Rights Campaign has called Marshall an "occasional ally." He will face Rick Goddard in November.
- **District 10:** Rep. Paul Broun (R-Athens), who recently introduced an amendment to the U.S. Constitution to ban same-sex marriage, surprised many by trouncing state Rep. Barry Fleming (R-Augusta) with 71 percent of the vote. Broun will face Democrat Bobby Saxon in the fall.
- **District 12:** Rep. John Barrow (D-Savannah) took 75 percent of the vote against state Sen. Regina Thomas (D-Savannah). John Stone of Hephzibah won the Republican Primary with 53 percent of the vote, avoiding a runoff. Stone states on his campaign website that he would support a constitutional amendment "and any other federal legislation necessary to preserve marriage as only between a man and woman."
- **District 13:** Rep. David Scott (D-Atlanta), who scored a 38 and 55 out of 100 on HRC's scorecard since taking office, beat state Sen. Donzella James 63 to 36 percent for the district that comprises parts of Atlanta and Henry, Fulton and Cobb counties. He will face Republican Deborah Honeycutt in the fall.

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Zoning board revokes permit for black gay program

Facility accused of switching missions

By RYAN LEE
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The city of Atlanta's Zoning Review Board voted unanimously July 10 to revoke the permit of a Grant Park facility that was licensed to provide transitional housing for people living with HIV/AIDS, but which has instead been operating as a drop-in community center for black gay youth.

"I think we have a situation here where we're comparing apples and oranges," David Payne, zoning board vice chair, said at the hearing. "We've got oranges today, but we approved apples originally."

In 1994, the city granted a "special use permit" to the National AIDS Education & Services for Minorities for the HIV/AIDS nonprofit to operate Gerald's House in a residential area of Grant Park. Gerald's House provided temporary housing for more than 100 black men living with HIV/AIDS from 1994 until March 2006, when it closed to undergo extensive renovations.

During the renovations, NAESM began using the location at 503 Boulevard as the site for another one of its programs, Da C.R.I.B.B. — a community center and AIDS awareness outreach program targeting young black gay men.

"There are frequent parties at the site, and there's a lot of noise at the site," said Brandy Crawford, a staff member in the city's Bureau of Planning who presented the case for closing the venue to the zoning board. "They have done rehearsals, and on several occasions, there has been very loud music coming from the site."

NAESM leaders and attorneys were defiant, but their arguments failed to resonate with the nine-member zoning review board.

Attorney Duncan Adams questioned the city's authority to close Gerald's House, and told board members that if they revoked the special use permit for a facility that serviced two "protected classes" — African Americans, and people living with HIV/AIDS — the city could be sued.

"This reeks of litigation and a discrimination lawsuit against the city of Atlanta," Adams said.

NAESM CLASHES WITH CITY OFFICIAL

Gerald's House closed in 2006 when the city mandated extensive renovations to the home, and NAESM moved Da C.R.I.B.B. to the location in an attempt to prevent vagrants from overtaking the property, said NAESM Executive Director Rudy Carn.

"It was never our intent for Da C.R.I.B.B. to stay there permanently," Carn said. "We always had the intention of going back to housing."

Gerald's House currently has one resident, and is reviewing at least four resident applications, said Carn, who added that Da C.R.I.B.B. is searching for a permanent location in the West End neighborhood.

One of the conditions in the special use permit granted to Gerald's House in 1994 was that if the housing program ever ceased operations, the permit would expire. The zoning review board's recommendation heads to the city council's zoning committee July 30, then to the full council Aug. 18.

Carn said Gerald's House will continue to operate.

"We can operate the facility without a special use permit — the house is not going anywhere," said Carn, who believes that zoning for that residential area allows up to 14 unrelated people to live in a multi-family house.

City Councilmember Carla Smith, who is leading the push to close Gerald's House and Da C.R.I.B.B., disputed Carn's claims.

"That's a residential, single-family home classification, and I don't think you can do a community service provider status in a single-family home," said Smith, who added that Grant Park neighbors asked for her help in shutting down the facility.

Three Grant Park neighbors attended the July 10 hearing to speak against Gerald's House, including Paul Zucca, who is gay and president of the Grant Park Neighborhood Association.

"My neighborhood was not very excited about it [in 1994], it was not a very popular use of this single-family home," said Zucca, who originally supported Gerald's House.

The Grant Park facility known as 'Gerald's House,' faces closure after operating as a community center for black gay youth known as Da C.R.I.B.B. (Photo by Dyana Bagby)

"I'm disappointed, I really believed they could do a good job," Zucca said. "I am not against the use that this group intends, my issue is good stewardship."

About three people also spoke in support of Gerald's House, including Rafer Johnson, who has volunteered at Da C.R.I.B.B., which stands for Creating Rich Intelligent Black Brothas.

"There is a crisis in our city, and it's important we are supporting this, and not using broad statements to discriminate against these young men," Johnson said.

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Downpours do nothing to diminish drought

Atlanta Pride still tallying, expects severe shortfall

By MATT SCHAFER
mschafer@sovo.com

The tale of the tape isn't in on Atlanta Pride 2008, but organizers expect lower attendance and revenues for their first year at the Civic Center.

"We're not going to have any accurate number. We don't even have a best guess estimate," Pride Executive Director Donna Narducci said. "We expect that it will be down because every situation we've been able to measure has been down from last year."

Pride employees are still picking through boxes, receipts and equipment they put into storage before determining the final profit-loss statement. Narducci said they would have a much clearer picture of Pride's finances by the end of the month. It costs approximately $750,000 to put on the annual event.

Of Pride's two new fundraisers to offset the cost of moving from Piedmont Park to the Atlanta Civic Center, one was a huge financial drain while another exceeded all expectations.

Pride lost money on the Friday Night Divas show. A rough counting of the crowd showed 500 attendees watched Expose, CeCe Peniston, Frenchie Davis and Thelma Houston as doors were left open allowing people to come in and out, apparently without paying the average $25 ticket cost, during the show.

"Ticket sales were nowhere near where we need to be," Narducci said. "It was supposed to be a fundraiser for Atlanta Pride, but it wasn't anything near that."

Pride's first poker tournament was an unexpected success, raising $4,990.

"That was hugely successful and from an expense standpoint it was very cost effective as well," Narducci said, adding they would likely expand the event in the future.

Pride's future is certain, Narducci said, regardless of the final financial figures.

"What are the odds of having a Pride next year? There has to be a Pride, there is too much work that has to be done," she said. "Where it will be? I don't know. When it will be? I don't know. What form it will be? I don't know, but there will be a Pride."

Atlanta Pride went from park to parking lot as Georgia's drought forced the festival to move from its traditional home in Piedmont Park to the Civic Center. (Photo by Bo Shell)

Atlanta's Director of Parks Ken Gillett continues to watch the lake levels in Piedmont Park and wait for rain. He has few answers for festivals looking to return home.

"We are always willing to sit and talk, but what is always frustrating to us is we have nothing to talk about," Gillett said. "There is still the drought, there is still the watering ban. We have no new information."

STORMS BRING LITTLE RELIEF

Many of the questions about Pride will be answered when the City of Atlanta makes a decision about large festivals returning to city parks. The city booted all festivals with attendance larger than 50,000 people out of Piedmont Park in January. Both the Dogwood Festival and Atlanta Pride circulated petitions asking to return.

"We don't know how many signatures we got," Narducci said. "It got packed away with a lot of our other stuff and is in storage."

Despite the hour of wind-whipped rain that soaked the Pride parade on July 6 and the nearly two inches that fell a Sunday later, Georgia is still under the conditions that caused city officials to evict large festivals from Piedmont Park.

David Stooksbury, the state's climatologist, said Georgia would remain under a drought condition until an extended period of wetter than normal weather rains on the state.

"If we just have normal weather we can expect the soils to get drier. I can't tell whether it will get wetter. I can't tell if it will get drier, but I can tell you that if we get normal weather it will get drier," Stooksbury said.

According to data collected at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the city is actually better off than other parts of Georgia, reporting 80 percent of normal rainfall in the last 90 days and 79 percent of normal over the past year.

However, Stooksbury warned that the effects of the drought are cumulative. While the soaking rains of the past weeks have replenished topsoil, they have done little to dampen deep soil. The deep soil is what feeds trees and provides a steady stream of water into rivers and creeks.

Stooksbury, also an associate professor of Engineering & Atmospheric Science at the University of Georgia in Athens, has not studied the turf at Piedmont Park but said its hybrid Bermuda grass should weather the drought fairly well.

"Your Bermuda grasses have a tendency to be more resilient during the summer than your cool season grasses," Stooksbury said. "Of course, part of the question has to do with the timing of the rain and the timing of traffic. In the spring and early summer you need to get a lot of growth though. If you did not get good growth early you would be concerned."

Although the rain of the last few days may have made lawns and plants grow, it has done very little to change the conditions at Piedmont Park.

"Many of the plants that were visibly stressed are looking much better, however, we were basically only able to get moisture into the topsoil. The deep soil is still very dry," Stooksbury said.

Unless more moisture soaks into the deep soil where trees dig their roots, the drought is going to reach a new stage.

"I do think we are going to see noticeable tree die off in Georgia, particularly in Atlanta," Stooksbury said.

Gillett's forestry division is the first line of response for removing trees in the city. He has already seen an increase in dead trees.

"I can't say what's causing it, but I can say we are seeing more dead and dying trees," he said.

OTHER PARKS PICK UP EVENTS

Other outdoor venues are able to continue to host outdoor festivals despite increasing drought conditions. State-owned Centennial Park absorbed some of the events from Piedmont Park.

"We got asked to take on several events because of restrictions at other parks, and we had to make decisions about what we could take on and what we could not," Nicole Rateau, Centennial Park's public relations specialist, said. "I don't think [the drought] has had an effect."

While both parks use the same hybrid Bermuda grass, Centennial Park uses far more "hardscape," such as concrete and bricks, than Piedmont Park. Although park officials refuse to release Centennial Park's total capacity, Rateau said it holds less people than Piedmont Park, resulting in less wear on the turf.

The parks are laid out differently. While Centennial Park continues to host concerts, it does so at its amphitheater, which has very little grass surrounding it. There hasn't been a concert on the grass since "On the Bricks" left the park for Stone Mountain and became "The Big Rock" a few years ago.

Stone Mountain is largely unaffected by drought concerns. Organizers canceled this year's "Snow Mountain" held in the winter months, but continue to host summer nightly laser shows and events like the Scottish Highland Games. Kelley Swann, the park's public relations specialist, said all of the water Stone Mountain uses comes from its lake, and is largely returned to the lake through the soil.

"We do irrigate, but it's through the lake water. So that water goes right back into our lake, so we don't use any city water," she said.

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Gay marriage in black and white

Despite support from civil rights icons, African-American opposition remains strong

By JOSHUA LYNSEN

Editors' note: This is part one of a series examining the views of black Americans on same-sex marriage.

Four decades ago, John Lewis stepped out onto the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala., to help lead more than 600 activists in a march for voting rights for African-Americans. The police brutality that followed led the March 7, 1965, protest to be forever known as "Bloody Sunday."

On Tuesday night, Lewis danced to the cheers of supporters at his Atlanta campaign party, celebrating his resounding reelection to an eleventh term in the U.S. Congress. The Georgia Democrat's lopsided victory over two primary challengers was hailed by gay voters and political leaders, who termed Lewis a "key ally" in the fight for gay rights on Capitol Hill.

To Lewis, one of the few members of Congress to speak out forcefully for full marriage rights for gay couples, the issues are simple.

"I've fought too long and too hard against discrimination based on color not to fight against discrimination because of sexual orientation," he has often said, most recently in a speech at the Atlanta Pride festival's VIP reception on July 5.

But the Georgia congressman illustrates a paradox that confounds gay rights activists, both black and white: While African-American civil rights leaders are among the most passionate and powerful allies speaking out for gay rights, support in the black population in general hasn't followed.

Despite growing support for same-sex marriage in the United States as measured by several recent polls, black Americans remain steadfastly opposed to gay unions.

According to research conducted by the National Black Justice Coalition and several other organizations, as many as two-thirds of black Americans are against gay marriage. Although the numbers vary by poll, research shows most blacks oppose both gay marriage and civil unions.

The findings come as some surveys show a majority of whites have dropped their objections to same-sex unions. A poll by Pew Research Center in May showed that fewer than 50 percent of whites object to gay marriage.

H. Alexander Robinson, executive director of the National Black Justice Coalition, said the continued opposition among black Americans shows that he and other advocates must recommit themselves to their work.

"I don't think we have a moment to waste in making the case," he said. "And quite frankly, we have to move these numbers."

SUPPORT NOT GROWING

Released in April, the National Black Justice Coalition report notes that blacks "are virtually the only constituency in the country that has not become more supportive over the last dozen years" of gay rights.

It says Asian-Pacific Islanders showed the highest rate of support for gay marriage or civil unions at 55 percent. Support among whites was at 46 percent, among Latinos at 35 percent and among blacks at 23 percent.

The report notes those findings reflected "strong gains in each of these groups except for blacks."

Some experts have been careful to note the findings should not be interpreted to mean that black Americans are the only ones who oppose gay marriage or civil unions.

"I know that we're looking at one set of polling data about African Americans and their attitudes on GLBT equality, but let's not use that data and suggest that gay people only face challenges in the African-American community," said Cuc Vu, chief diversity officer for the Human Rights Campaign.

"There is a lack of support for LGBT equality in many other communities. In 2004, for example, we witnessed 6,000 Chinese Americans protest marriage in San Francisco. Homophobia is very real in every community."

But it is, perhaps, best documented among blacks. A survey for HRC in March 2004 showed fewer than one-third of black voters said gays should be allowed to marry.

Twenty percent of that survey's 600 respondents indicated they strongly believed that gays should be allowed to marry. Another 8 percent agreed that gays should be allowed to marry, but did not hold a strong position on the issue.

According to the survey, 50 percent of blacks strongly believed that gays should not be allowed to marry and another 11 percent agreed, albeit "not strongly."

Four years later, surveys show the numbers generally are unchanged.

A national survey of 1,505 people by Pew Research Center in May shows 26 percent of blacks favor gay marriage, while 56 percent oppose it. By comparison, the same survey shows 40 percent of whites favor gay marriage and 49 percent oppose it.

Rev. Larry Brumfield, a black pastor at Westminster Church of the Brethren in northern Maryland, said he was saddened by the findings.

"I wouldn't say I'm surprised," he said, "but I'm a little put off by it because I feel that we have, as a people, as a group, as a demographic unit, we have not educated ourselves and learned and grown."

Brumfield, who is straight, said too few blacks accept sexual orientation as the immutable trait many scientists believe it to be.

"I think a lot of folk think it's a conscious choice," he said. "But like blue eyes or green eyes, it's how God made us."

Robinson said although he and other gay activists have progressed in their educational work among religious and secular black communities, support for same-sex marriage has been agonizingly slow to materialize.

"African Americans, in large part, have been very resistant to any notion of discrimination against anyone, even when it comes to same-sex couples," he said. "But we have not made the case yet that excluding same-sex couples from marriage is discrimination."

OPINION DOESN'T FOLLOW LEADERS

Black civil rights icons have been among the most outspoken heterosexual allies to support gay marriage, but the opinions of these revered leaders hasn't swayed the results of opinion polls targeting African Americans.

Among those who have announced support for gay marriage are Lewis; Coretta Scott King, the wife of Martin Luther King, Jr., who died in 2006; Atlanta's Rev. Joseph Lowery; activist and former Democratic presidential candidate Rev. Al Sharpton; and South African Bishop Desmond Tutu, who won the Noble Peace Prize for his work against apartheid there.

Julian Bond, chair of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, also is an ardent supporter of equal rights for gays, and even declined to attend King's funeral because it was held at Atlanta's New Birth Missionary Baptist Church, which is led by Bishop Eddie Long, in part because Long led a 2004 march in Atlanta against gay marriage.

"Many gays, many lesbians, worked side by side with me in the civil rights movement," Bond said in 2005. "Am I supposed to tell them now thanks for risking their lives and their limbs to help me win my rights but that they are excluded because of the circumstances of their birth? Not a chance."

But too many black Americans, Robinson said, are failing to hear the arguments.

"There's a perception that our relationships are different," he said, "and those perceptions are based on religious views about marriage and religiously derived notions about the purpose of marriage."

CIVIL UNIONS ALSO LAG

Marriage aside, the National Black Justice Coalition report and other surveys have found that civil unions also are unpopular among blacks.

In 2004, 36 percent of the HRC survey's black respondents said they strongly opposed civil unions, while another 11 percent were generally opposed. The total opposed jumped this year to 53 percent, according to the Pew Center's survey in May.

Robinson said opposition to civil unions runs high in part because the purely legal institution is seen as too close to its religious counterpart.

"Civil unions are seen as marriage light," he said. "It's not seen as substantially different."

Also problematic, Robinson said, is that many fear that civil unions could put gay couples further along the path toward securing marriage rights.

He said many blacks thus advocate against civil unions because they believe "we have to hold this ground, because if we lose here, then everything else falls."

Brumfield agreed. He said many blacks "think that gay, lesbian, transgender people have an agenda of some kind, an agenda that's dangerous for our society," and that agenda must be stopped.

"It's seen as a first step. 'If we allow them civil unions, the next thing they'll want is their curriculum in schools, training our children to be gay,'" Brumfield said.

Robinson said gay rights activists working to win new allies often are challenged to overcome the suspicions and fears that are held by many black Americans.

"They see it as about much more than marriage," he said. "It's about trying to normalize homosexuals and homosexual behavior."

But he said it's essential that such fears are alleviated before greater problems develop.

"You have to understand how much of a threat that, potentially, these numbers suggest we're under," Robinson said. "I can't help but fear that if left unchecked, that this will begin to erode support for other measures of protecting gay and lesbian people, because that's how prejudice works."

Next week: The role that religion plays in shaping black opinion, why discussing gay issues within a civil rights context can be problematic, and how the issues play out in Georgia, where black legislators were the most cohesive group against the 2004 state constitutional ban on gay marriage.

Laura Douglas-Brown contributed

Civil rights legend U.S. Rep. **John Lewis** (D-Ga.), a strong supporter of gay marriage, spoke at an Atlanta Pride reception earlier this month. (Photo by Sher Pruitt)

Support for gay marriage or civil unions by racial group

Asian-Pacific Islanders: 55 percent
Whites: 46 percent
Latinos: 35 percent
African-Americans: 23 percent

Source: "At the Crossroads: African-American Attitudes, Perceptions, and Beliefs toward Marriage Equality," National Black Justice Coalition

Congress to hold hearing on 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'

Some experts say military's gay ban is 'on its last legs'

By CHRIS JOHNSON

Gay Marine Corps Staff Sgt. **Eric Alva**, the first U.S. service member wounded in Operation Iraqi Freedom, is scheduled to testify at a congressional hearing on 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' next week. Alva was not expelled under the policy and Congress is so far not expected to hear from any of the more than 12,000 service members kicked out for being gay. (File photo by Henry Linser)

An upcoming congressional hearing on the U.S. military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, coupled with recent calls from former military leaders to repeal the law, is raising questions about whether the gay ban is nearing its end.

The congressional hearing on "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," scheduled for Wednesday, is slated to feature witnesses on both sides of the issue. They will make their cases before the personnel subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee.

Rep. Susan Davis (D-Calif.), chair of the subcommittee, said she decided to hold the hearing because Congress has not looked at military policy toward gays in 15 years.

"Being in the middle of the two wars, as we have been, I think the issue has come up repeatedly, and it's important to start that conversation," she said.

The hearing marks the first time that Congress has held a discussion devoted to gays in the military since lawmakers passed the law barring open service in 1993.

Witnesses that Democrats have selected to speak at the hearing include Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Eric Alva, who is gay and the first U.S. service member wounded in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Alva lost his right leg as a result of his injury.

Alva said he intends to tell lawmakers about his experience in the Marine Corps, how he was injured on the first day of the Iraq war and how current military policy shows that there is "prejudice" in the U.S. government.

"We're allowing our prejudice to be put into action by allowing this discriminatory policy of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' to still exist, even in this day and age," he said.

Alva, who left the military in a medical retirement, said "it just doesn't make sense" to discharge people who are playing important roles in the military because of their sexual orientation.

Other witnesses chosen by Democrats include retired Capt. Joan Darrah, a former Navy intelligence officer and lesbian, and retired Army Maj. Gen. Vance Coleman, who is straight and a decorated division commander.

Republicans have selected Elaine Donnelly, president for the Center for Military Readiness and opponent of gays serving openly in the military, and retired Army Sgt. Maj. Brian Jones, who formerly served in special operations.

No one who has been discharged under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is slated to testify before Congress.

'BREAKING THE ICE'

A number of gay advocacy groups, including the Human Rights Campaign and Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays, are planning to submit written testimony to the committee.

Davis said organizers had to "really bend over backwards" to create what she called "a balanced hearing" with witnesses on both sides of the issue.

The subcommittee asked the Defense Department to send a representative to the hearing, but the department declined.

"I would have frankly liked to have witnesses from the Department of Defense, but at this particular time we're not doing that and they're really not quite willing to come forward," Davis said.

DOD did not respond to a request seeking comment.

Davis said the upcoming hearing should "break the ice" for involving DOD in future hearings on "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Another recent event drawing attention to "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is a discussion at the Aspen Ideas Festival in which creators of the law called on the Pentagon and Congress to take another look at the issue.

Gen. Colin Powell, former Secretary of State and chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff when "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was implemented, told the audience in Aspen, Colo., that "the country has changed enormously in 15 years" and said it was time to "review the policy."

In his tenure as chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Powell was one of the architects of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and recommended the policy to Congress.

Powell told his audience that he was "not prepared to say we should do away with" current policy "until you have talked with the people who have to execute it and implement it - the armed forces leadership."

Powell said he took issue with how the prohibition of open service in the armed forces became law, and said he would have preferred that it not be a law, but simply a military policy, "so the military could deal with it."

Powell also drew a distinction between how the prohibition of open service in the military is different from how blacks were once segregated from whites in the armed forces.

"I think it's a different issue," he said. "I think sexuality and sexual preferences and the confines of barracks life is a different issue."

Sam Nunn, who was a Democratic senator from Georgia and chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee when "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was implemented, spoke during the same forum at the festival and also called for a review of current policy.

Nunn already said in a June 3 interview with the Atlanta Journal-Constitution that military leaders should examine how the policy is working.

"I think [when] 15 years go by on any personnel policy, it's appropriate to take another look at it - see how it's working, ask the hard questions, hear from the military," Nunn told the Journal-Constitution. "Start with a Pentagon study."

REPORT PUSHES REPEAL

Another group of high-ranking retired military officers called on Congress to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and allow the Pentagon handle the issue of gays in the armed forces.

The officers, a general or admiral from each of the four services, voiced their opinion in a report published July 7 by the Palm Center at the University of California.

Nathaniel Frank, a senior research fellow for the Palm Center, acknowledged that these events are representative of "an enormous amount of momentum for change" that has "been building for quite some time."

Frank said the current law is "on its last legs," but noted that Congress may be reluctant to address the issue.

"It's something that I think scares lawmakers because many are still scarred from [former President] Clinton's war wounds in the early '90s," he said.

Clinton promised to allow open service in his 1992 presidential campaign, but acquiesced to pressure from Congress on the issue in his first year in the White House.

Frank said Iraq is a bigger issue and the next administration would take up war policy in its first few months as opposed to addressing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

The researcher said he could not anticipate when lawmakers would take up the military policy toward gays, but he added, "it's hard to imagine this [policy] remaining past the next Congress."

But Donnelly, the opponent of gays in the military who will testify before lawmakers, said she expects that the current law will be retained.

Donnelly drew a distinction between the law that Congress passed in 1993 and the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, which Clinton issued to execute the law. Donnelly said she supports the law but not Clinton's policy.

"That law has been upheld as constitutional several times as recently as last month," she said. "There is absolutely no reason to repeal it, and the confusion caused by 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' is part of the problem here," she said.

YEARS AWAY?

Aubrey Sarvis, executive director of the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, said in an interview in May that even with a new Democratic administration in the White House, getting Congress to repeal military policy would be difficult in 2009. Congress would "certainly" repeal the statute by 2010 or 2011, he said.

Davis said she has no idea when current law on military policy toward gays would change, but she does not expect Congress to address the issue during this administration. A change in policy is "certainly at least a few years out," she said.

The lawmaker said military policy toward gays is "not really a Democrat or Republican issue" because the families involved in the matter have different political stripes.

Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama has promised during the campaign that he would work to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" if elected to the White House. The Obama campaign declined to comment on how high a priority repealing the law would be for his administration.

Republican presidential candidate John McCain has stated in the Republican presidential primary debates that he supports current military policy toward gays. The McCain campaign did not respond to a request for comment.

Davis is a sponsor of the Military Readiness Enhancement Act, which is in limbo in the U.S. House. The bill, which has 143 co-sponsors, would end "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and establish a non-discrimination policy for gays in the military.

"I've come to the conclusion that we're adhering to the law because it is the law now, but that operationally there are not a lot of impediments to lifting it," Davis said. "And I think that it's in our best interest to do that."

ABC, FX win praise from GLAAD

NEW YORK (AP) — The marriage between the gay characters Kevin and Scotty in the season finale of ABC's "Brothers & Sisters" helped the network win high praise from an advocacy group that pushes for more visibility of such characters on television. It was the first wedding of two gay or lesbian characters in a prime-time scripted series, according to the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. ABC has had other historic moments, including introducing a gay character to "Soap" in 1977, having a gay teen in "My So-Called Life" and Ellen DeGeneres coming out on "Ellen" as well as in real life. ABC ranked highest among the broadcast networks in hours where gay and lesbian characters were portrayed, with FX topping the 10 cable networks monitored, GLAAD said. FX was praised for "Nip/Tuck," which GLAAD said had one gay, lesbian or bisexual character in each episode. "Rescue Me" had a minor storyline with a gay couple having a commitment ceremony and "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia" featured a transgender character. Fox, also owned by News Corp., and NBC both had "failing" grades from GLAAD. While GLAAD was pleased by the inclusion of gay characters on "House" and the shows "American Idol" and "So You Think You Can Dance," the group didn't like a "New Amsterdam" episode in which two lesbian characters fell in love with a straight man. GLAAD is pushing NBC to include more gay characters, particularly after the prominent lesbian doctor Kerry Weaver left "ER."

'Brothers and Sisters' aired the first wedding of two gay characters in a prime-time scripted series. (Photo courtesy ABC)

SOUTHERN VOICE NATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

RELIGION

Gay U.S. bishop challenges exclusion at Anglican meeting

LONDON (AP) — The first openly gay U.S. Episcopal bishop was barred from a once-a-decade Anglican meeting so he wouldn't become a focus of the global event. Anglicans on all sides of the issue agree: The strategy has backfired. New Hampshire Bishop Gene Robinson has been embraced by sympathetic Anglicans in England and Scotland who view his exclusion as an affront to their Christian beliefs. Robinson plans several appearances on the outskirts of the Lambeth Conference to be what he called a "constant and friendly" reminder of gays in the church. "I'm just not willing to let the bishops meet and pretend that we don't exist," Robinson said in an interview Sunday with the Associated Press before preaching at St. Mary's Church Putney. "They've taken vows to serve all the people in dioceses, not just certain ones." The Anglican spiritual leader, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, did not include Robinson and a few other bishops in the conference as he tried to prevent a split in the world Anglican Communion. The 77 million-member fellowship - the third-largest in the world behind Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians - has been on the brink of schism since Robinson was consecrated in 2003. The Episcopal Church is the Anglican body in the U.S. Robinson and Episcopal leaders had tried for years to negotiate a role for the New Hampshire bishop at Lambeth, but were unsuccessful. He resolved to come to England anyway. "I'm not storming the pulpit to wrestle the microphone from the archbishop," Robinson said. "My agenda is this: What does the church's treatment of gay and lesbian people say about God? You've got all these people talking about gays and lesbians being an abomination before God. Does that make you want to run out and go to an Anglican church and sing God's praises?"

POLITICS

Mass. Senate votes to let out-of-state gays marry

BOSTON (AP) — The Massachusetts Senate has voted to repeal a 1913 law used to bar out-of-state gay couples from marrying in the state. The law prohibits couples from obtaining marriage licenses if they couldn't legally wed in their home states. After Massachusetts became the first state to allow gay marriages in 2004, then-Gov. Mitt Romney ordered town clerks to enforce the little-known law and deny licenses to out-of-state couples. The repeal effort has the support of Gov. Deval Patrick, whose 18-year-old daughter announced last month she is a lesbian. The Massachusetts Senate voted Tuesday to repeal the law. The House is expected to vote this week. An analysis found repealing the law could draw thousands of couples to Massachusetts, boosting the economy by $111 million over three years.

From staff and wire reports

FRIEND or FOE

FRIEND

Jamie Larue
(Photo courtesy Larue)

It's easy to forget that librarians are often on the frontlines of the so-called "culture war," with parents demanding that children's books with gay characters be banned. After fights over the classic "Heather Has Two Mommies" and the more recent "King & King," now comes "Uncle Bobby's Wedding," the story of a guinea pig learning about her uncle's marriage to his boyfriend.

Luckily, Jamie Larue, director of Douglas County Libraries in Castle Rock, Colo., respectfully disagreed with a patron's wish to have the book removed from the library because some of its material may be "inappropriate."

"Library collections don't imply endorsement; they imply access to the many different ideas of our culture, which is precisely our purpose in public life," Larue wrote on his blog. Thanks to his stand, there's no shushing of fairness here.

FOE

The number of couples getting legally married in California and Massachusetts? Thousands. The number of such legal marriages to be counted in the 2010 Census? Absolutely none.

The federal bureau in charge of counting how many people are in the U.S., as well as ethnic, economic and a sundry other characteristics, will not count same-sex marriages because of the federal Defense of Marriage Act. Instead, the Census will change gay spouses to "unmarried partners" — the same classification it used in 2000, long before Mass. and Calif. legalized same-sex marriage.

So, once again, the Census — which does not ask for participants' sexual orientation — has found a way to negate our numbers. And it doesn't add up to equality.

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VIEWPOINT

What I learned from Eddie Long

After visiting six mega-churches in six weeks, I know we can't give up on evangelical Christians

By PAIGE SCHILT

THIS SUMMER, WHILE MANY FAMILIES WITH kids were recovering from the end of the semester and gearing up for camp or vacation, my partner and I, along with our intrepid five-year-old son, were setting off for uncharted social territory. Our family was one of 50 gay or gay-friendly families who visited America's biggest evangelical churches as part of a project called the American Family Outing.

Our plan was simple. Mega-churches and their leaders wield broad cultural and political influence, so why not invite their families to get to know lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender families over a potluck supper or a picnic?

Back in December 2007, Soulforce wrote letters to six mega-church leaders and asked them to match families from their congregation with LGBT families for a meal and conversation. Then, between Mother's Day and Father's Day 2008, we set off with hopes of attending worship services and sharing some potato salad and watermelon with families who had, all too often, been cast as our polar opposites. If there was a way to navigate around the divisiveness of the culture wars, our little group of families was determined to find it.

But what first seemed simple was a little more complicated when the rubber hit the road. After six months of letters and phone calls, we arrived at our first stop, Joel Osteen's Lakewood Church in Houston, without having heard a word from the church. But we persisted, and eventually Rev. Osteen did agree to a meeting — not with LGBT families, but with our straight clergy ally, Rev. Jay Bakker.

Thus we learned one of the first lessons of the American Family Outing: families meeting other families across the gay/evangelical divide is still a radical idea.

ALTHOUGH THE REST OF THE CHURCHES DID AGREE to meet with us, and many met us with grace and warmth, none invited rank and file church families to the meetings. For the most part, we met with pastors, senior staff, and their spouses.

I guess mega-church leaders intuit something that most LGBT people already know: when people meet us and our families, when they hear our stories and see our love for each other, they find it much harder to silently support discrimination in the pews or at the ballot box. In fact, opinion research suggests that having a gay friend actually trumps religiosity when it comes to people's attitudes about gay rights.

Top: **Eddie Long** (Photo by AP). Above: **Paige Schilt** (right), with her son, Waylon, and wife, Katy. (Photo courtesy Schilt)

The churches' hesitance to let our families mingle with their families brings us to the second major lesson of the American Family Outing: we are already one family.

In every city we visited, we met LGBT people whose mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles — even their sons and daughters — attended the non-affirming mega-church we planned to visit.

This was most tangibly borne out in Atlanta, when we visited Bishop Eddie Long's New Birth Missionary Baptist Church. Our clergy leader for the visit was a young minister named Troy Sanders.

Unbeknownst to Troy, his godmother had been tapped to participate in the meeting from the church side. The two had been estranged since Troy came out as gay, and they hadn't spoken in a couple of years.

At the end of the official meeting, Troy's godmother — a small woman in a pink Sunday dress — asked everyone to wait so that she could publicly apologize for losing touch with the godson she still loves very much.

THAT MOMENT IN ATLANTA ALSO ILLUSTRATES THE third major lesson of the American Family Outing: don't listen to the received wisdom.

I can't tell you how many people told us not to bother to visit New Birth, because Bishop Long, who led a 2004 march in support of a state constitutional ban on marriage equality, was too virulently homophobic.

And yet, in spite of Long's track record, New Birth turned out to be one of the best stops on our journey. Bishop Long was captivated by the question of how to heal the rift with the Georgia LGBT community, and he described himself as open to new understandings about gay men and lesbians.

This leads me to the last major lesson of the Outing: new understandings of sexual orientation are afoot in the mega-churches. Several of our discussions revealed diminishing support for ex-gay programs. One pastor called the research that props up reparative therapy "frankly embarrassing."

While most of the churches still insist that gays and lesbians must remain celibate in order to serve or become members, there is an emerging acknowledgement that sexual orientation is complex in its origins and that attempts to change it can do more harm than good.

OUR JOURNEY WAS ALTERNATELY REWARDING AND frustrating, revelatory and just plain hard. But, at the end of the day — and the end of our journey to mega-churches — it's about love.

The day after our visit to Saddleback Church in California, and after eight wonderful years of caring for each other in sickness and in health, through good times and bad, my wife and I were able to be legally married. Our son wore a size 5T tuxedo and held the rings with the gravity of a palace guard.

As the pastor pronounced us "spouses for life," I felt joy mixed with sadness about the mega-churches' prescription of celibacy for lesbian and gay people. This conditional welcome is so different from the deep and accepting love that I experience in my LGBT-affirming congregation, in my personal walk with God, and in my family.

It is in their acceptance and support that I found the strength and inspiration to spend my summer visiting mega-churches. It's time to share the love and open the door to all our families.

Paige Schilt is media director for Soulforce. She can be reached at paige@soulforce.org.

soapbox

SOUND OFF

Three ways to make your Southern Voice heard: Send letters to **editor@sovo.com**. • Visit **www.sovo.com** and click "Sound Off." • Use **"Comments"** sections following each story online.

SoVo readers had plenty to say about **Will Bower**, a gay man who helped found Party Unity, My Ass to protest Sen. Barack Obama winning the Democratic presidential nomination. (Photo courtesy Bower)

No respect for gay Dem organizing against Obama

Re: "Gay man seeks to undermine Obama" (news, June 20)

The only way to understand what this guy is doing is that his move is all about him. How does his voting for McCain respond to the claimed concern?

I do not believe William Bower's claim of disenfranchisement. Mr. Bower should ask himself what's more important in this election —his personal anger or making sure that we have the right person for the job. And we do need a president who will at least be in the corner of the LGBT community.

Do I understand this correctly? A gay Democrat does not like the rules, so he is going to vote for a Republican hate monger to spite his own party?

I've always said that the difference between The Left and The Right is that, when The Right decides to "circle the wagons," they know to shoot outward rather than inward.

Outrage over sentence in death of S.C. gay man

Re: "Three-year sentence in killing of S.C. gay man angers family, activists" (news, June 22)

This SOB should get death. He should never be back on our streets to walk free. He needs to die for what he did.

South Carolina! Why should a thing like that suprise anyone, that's Bible land! And blacks had better fall in line or the tree will be waiting. Sad.

South Carolina is the most homophobic state I have ever been to. I used to go to a gay bar in Greenville, S.C., in 1988. Every time I walked out of the bar, cars would stop in front of the bar and people would get out and yell and scream homophobic remarks like "You faggot!"

Stop complaining about Atlanta Pride

Re: "Don't punish Pride over Piedmont Park" (editorial by Laura Douglas-Brown, June 27)

Thank you. Listening to all the whining about "Pride moved" and "Oh I have to pay for a couple of things" only made me more determined to attend the event like I have since moving to Atlanta. I've volunteered at my company's booth the past two years, and I honestly have no idea where this sudden change in attitude is coming from. Everyone I've met there has loved it, more so the repeat patrons. Oh my goodness, you had to trek a little farther. Oh dear, you had to pony up a little cash to see a musical event. The air is ripe for change this year; a presidential race that has the world on the edge of its seat, malcontent over exponentially rising gas prices, same-sex marriage debates are raging on both coasts. Embrace something new for once, people — stop complaining!

Calif. weddings offer hope to gay couples in Ga.

Re: "California dreaming" (editorial by Laura Douglas-Brown, June 13)

Thanks for saying it. I was married twice before realizing the failures were because I was gay and however good the man was, he wasn't a woman. Now I really want to marry my partner of 16 years with the knowledge that this time, only death will part us; and maybe not that depending on one's belief in reincarnation.

MAILBOX

Thanks for remembering Stonewall's true history

To the Editors:

Re: "A time to fight" (news, July 4)

It was a pleasure to read Ryan Lee's well written article on the Stonewall Riots, which kindly credited my book. Most articles I read about Stonewall, whether in the gay or the non-gay press, are neither so accurate nor go into as much depth.

As your excellent newspaper is based in Atlanta, I thought it might interest you to know that I am a Georgia native. I was born in Jesup and attended Emory University. I realized I was gay during my freshman year of college (1970-1971). In my senior year, there was not one openly gay person on campus. Though closeted, I tried to get some gay-friendly energy going on campus by starting a men's liberation group and approaching another closeted gay man to do an article on homosexuality in the Emory Wheel. That reporter, oddly enough, turned out to be the future gay historian Robert Aldrich.

I wish there had been a newspaper like yours when I lived in Atlanta. Congratulations on 20 years of making the South more supportive of gay civil rights.

DAVID CARTER
New York

BUT LOOK HOW WELL HE'D BALANCE THE TICKET!
BARACK OBAMA-SAM NUNN IN 2008
CHANGE WE CAN BELIEVE IN
&
NOSTALGIA SO STALE AND MOLDY YOU'LL WONDER IF WE'VE COMPLETELY LOST OUR MINDS!
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THE Q

What's on your 'don't' list for relationships?

My pet peeve is community, so that's important. You shouldn't hold information back from your partner because they always find out about it.

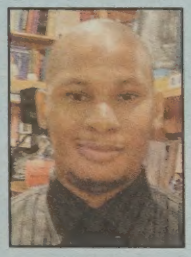
Taniah Franklin, 26
Midtown

I'm monogamous, so being unfaithful would be a don't. And don't expect your spouse to pay your debts off. Excessive drinking and drugs are a don't also.

Ron Milner, 57
Midtown

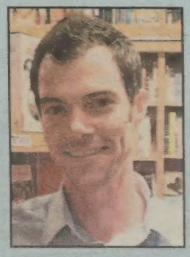
Arguing in public.

Stanford Strong, 31
Midtown



Honesty is a given, but I respect openness. And the relationship doesn't end when we are apart.

Walter Vinson, 27
Midtown



Don't lie.

Ben Keen, 31
Decatur

Compiled by Rob Beck

For the Kid *in all of us*

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- ☐ 1 pack 3-hole punched paper (150+ sheets)
- ☐ 1 box crayons (24+ colors)
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- ☐ 1 glue stick

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NEVER-A COVER

WEEKLY LINE UP

MON:
DRAG ON THE EDGE
Starring Alexandria Martin

TUE:
THREE MEN AND A BABY
Starring Gigi Monroe As The Baby

WED:
THE HOOK-UP
Sponsored By MANHUNT

THU:
THE A-LIST
Starring Shawnna Brooks

FRI:
KITTY LeCLAW'S MEOW MIX
@ 11:00PM

SAT:
THE DARING DIVAS

SUN:
THE BIG TIME SHOW
@ 9:00PM

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SO VO SOUTHERN VOICE COMMUNITY

FRIDAY, JULY 18 & WEDNESDAY, JULY 23

Atlanta WAND hosts its regular peace demonstration, **Stand for Peace**, and an author talk with **David Sirota**, author of "The Uprising: An Unauthorized Tour of the Populist Revolt Scaring Wall Street and Washington." Stand: Friday, 12 p.m. – 1 p.m. at the corner of Peachtree and 14th Street. Sirota: 7 p.m. – 9 p.m. at Manuel's Tavern, 602 Highland Ave. 404-524-5999, www.atlantawand.org

SATURDAY, JULY 19 & SUNDAY, JULY 20

The Atlanta HRC presents the 8th **Gospel & Unity Celebration** and an **Out & About** event. Gospel: Saturday, 4 p.m. at Victory Church, 1170 N Hairston Road, Stone Mountain. Out & About: Sunday, 4 p.m. at Shout, 1197 Peachtree St. http://atlanta.hrc.org

TUESDAY, JULY 22 & WEDNESDAY, JULY 23

The gay Atlanta Executive Network presents two **networking luncheons.** Tuesday, 11:55 a.m. at BrickTop's, 3280 Peachtree Road NE. Wednesday, 11:45 a.m. at Villa Christina, 4000 Summit Blvd. www.aen.org

TUESDAY, JULY 22

The Atlanta Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce presents a **Business Builder Lunch**. 12 p.m. – 1:15 p.m. at Cowtippers, 1600 Piedmont Ave. www.atlantagaychamber.org

THURSDAY, JULY 24

The Feminist Women's Health Center presents **'Women, Memory, & Queer Desire,'** with the Atlanta History Center's Wesley Chenault and Staci Catron. 7 p.m. – 9 p.m. at the Feminist Women's Health Center, 1924 Cliff Valley Way, feministcenter.org

FRIDAY, JULY 25

The AGLCC presents its monthly **Fourth Friday Mixer**. 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. at Ikea, 441 16th St. NW. www.atlantagaychamber.org

FRIDAY, JULY 25 – SUNDAY, JULY 27

Head to the coast for the **MEGA Family Vacation at Tybee Island**. All weekend at Tybee Island, visit website for more details. www.megafamilyproject.org

ON THE WEB:
For other calendars of special events, visit www.sovo.com.

TO ADD A LISTING...
e-mail calendar@sovo.com, call 404-876-1819, ext. 23, or fax to 404-876-2709, attn: Rob Beck. Entries should be submitted at least 14 days in advance of publication date.

Queer and pro-choice

Activists protest anti-gay, anti-choice group's visit to ATL

By DYANA BAGBY
dbagby@sovo.com

Queer activists protest anti-gay Operation Save America's visit to Atlanta this week. Inset: T-shirts worn by OSA members condemned homosexuality along with a host of other issues. (Photo by Dyana Bagby)

SEVERAL LARGE POSTERS OF ALLEGEDLY ABORTED fetuses, victims of the Holocaust and black men lynched from trees were draped from poles set up at Woodruff Park in downtown Atlanta this week as part of Operation Save America's national gathering to preach against abortion and other "sins" like homosexuality.

But many self-described queer members of SPARK, a local reproductive justice organization, made sure to be on hand holding their own signs across the street from Woodruff Park to ask motorists and pedestrians to "Say No to OSA."

"I'm out here is because OSA is a racist, homophobic, misogynistic organization," says Paris Hatcher, 28, co-director of SPARK.

Unique Robinson, 20, a queer protester from Baltimore, Md., says OSA's tactics, including the explicit imagery, were "exploitive and sick."

"I'm sick of middle-aged white people who don't know our situations telling us what to do with our bodies and over generalizing abortions like we're getting them like we're shopping," she says.

"And they have the absolute nerve to put up these most grotesque photos and compare abortion to slavery and the Holocaust … Queer people need to be involved because [OSA] is trying to take away our voice. An oppressive force like OSA will stop at nothing. …

"My body is a political statement and I refuse to be silenced anymore," Robinson says.

SEVERAL OPERATION SAVE AMERICA MEMBERS were lined up outside the Atlanta Gay Pride fest July 4-6 as they are every year. OSA organizers said this year there were approximately 200-250 members taking part in their summer convention lasting through July 19.

Dr. Alveda King, niece of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., welcomed OSA to Atlanta and Flip Benham, director of OSA, noted race played a role in who was getting abortions.

"Martin Luther King did not dedicate his life so that black mothers and fathers would kill their children," he said in a statement.

After Martin Luther King was assassinated, his wife, Coretta Scott King carried on his legacy, including forging her own that included fighting for gay rights.

OSA'S TARGETING OF WOMEN OF COLOR IS RIPE for resistance, says Erin O'Daniel, 30, a queer activist.

"There's always been issues related to access and healthcare for LGBTQ people, and many times that overlaps with many, many reproductive issues," she said. "And there are many parallels with reproductive justice issues, primarily for women of color. OSA is absolutely a homophobic organization and it's important we address that issue right along with all the others."

Jerry Crawford, an OSA member from Rochester, N.Y., stood with about a dozen other OSA members at Woodruff Park. For Crawford, the organization's mission in Atlanta is a wake-up call to warn the country to turn away from "sins" such as abortion and homosexuality.

"We are here to proclaim the truth that first of all that abortion kills children and it's an abomination before God … and to issue a warning to all cities God will not suffer forever. Judgment is coming. And it's not just abortion, it's the kingdom of God," he said.

"We have become like Sodom and Gomorrah, like Babylon, and we are the prophetic voice to this city and nation to turn from their ways."

Hatcher of SPARK, however, believes OSA tries to bully people into taking their side. She also disagrees with gay people who are pro-life because they fear fetuses that may be born as gay babies are threatened.

"I think to simplify reproductive justice down to just the abortion debate is really simplistic. I think why queer people, why LGBT people, should be involved is because we're talking about our bodies, our sexuality and being able to express that freely," she says.

"While there may be talk about aborting gay fetuses, many of these people [like OSA] don't want queer people to have children, don't think we are fit to parent. We really have to expand the discussion and rethink the whole idea of liberation and community."

Man executed for grisly killing of boyfriend in Fulton

SOVO FLASHBACK

Robert Dale Conklin was executed July 12, 2005, for the 1984 murder and dismemberment of a former boyfriend, despite last-minute appeals that reached the U.S. Supreme Court.

Conklin declined to make a final statement but did ask for a prayer as he faced lethal injection at the Georgia Diagnostic & Classification Prison in Jackson, 45 minutes south of Atlanta. He died at 7:44 p.m. on July 12, according to the state Department of Corrections.

Conklin, 44, was sentenced to death in June 1984 for the murder of George Grant Crooks, a 28-year-old Smyrna attorney. Conklin, then a 23-year-old fast-food manager on parole for burglary and armed robbery, first met Crooks at an interstate rest stop, according to court documents. Over a period of time, the two established a sexual relationship.

According to court records, in March 1984, Conklin and Crooks got into an argument. Conklin said at trial that Crooks tried to rape him. After the two exchanged blows, Crooks sat on Conklin, who then stabbed him with a screwdriver. Conklin then dismembered Crooks' body and disposed of it in nine trash bags behind Conklin's apartment in Sandy Springs.

Robert Dale Conklin was executed in July 2005 for killing his boyfriend. (File photo)

— Southern Voice, July 15, 2005

ATL SPORTS CALENDAR

THIS WEEK

FRIDAY, JULY 18
Atlanta Rainbow Trout, Swimming, Water Polo Practice and Ladies Swim Night, Georgia Tech Aquatic Center. Also practices Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday. www.atlantarainbowtrout.com
Atlanta Team Tennis Association, Friday Night Doubles Mixer, Piedmont Park Tennis Center. www.atta.org
Decatur Women's Sports League, Tennis, DeKalb Tennis Center in Decatur. http://decaturwomenssportsleague.info
Friends Friday Bowling League, League Play, Midtown Bowl. www.friendsfriday.org
Hotlanta Softball League's Gamma, Poker Team Fundraiser, Stage Door. www.hotlantasoftball.org
Hotlanta Volleyball League, Recreational Open Play, Agnes Scott College. www.hotlantavolleyball.org
Wilderness Network of Georgia, Martinis and IMAX. www.wildnetga.org

SATURDAY, JULY 19
Front Runners Atlanta, Weekly Run, Piedmont Park. http://frontrunnersatlanta.org
Hotlanta Soccer Association, Practice, Grady High School. hotlantasoccer.com
Wilderness Network of Georgia, Victory Creek Trail Dayhike.

SUNDAY, JULY 20
Hotlanta Softball League, Women's Division, Metro Atlanta Softball Complex. www.hotlantasoftball.org
Lambda Bowling League, League Play, Midtown Bowl. www.igbo.org/leagues/League_Detail.cfm?LID=85
Wilderness Network of Georgia, Chattooga River Swimming Hole.

MONDAY, JULY 21
Front Runners Atlanta, Weekly Run, Inman Park.

TUESDAY, JULY 22
Atlanta Dream, Regular Season Versus Sacramento, Philips Arena. www.wnba.com/dream
Atlas Atlanta Bowling League, League Play, Midtown Bowl. www.igbo.org/leagues/League_Detail.cfm?LID=78
Hotlanta Volleyball League, Intermediate and Advanced League Play, Agnes Scott College. www.hotlantavolleyball.org

WEDNESDAY, JULY 23
Decatur Women's Sports League, Bowling, Suburban Lanes in Decatur.
Front Runners Atlanta, Weekly Run, Piedmont Park.
Hotlanta Soccer Association, Spring Season Play, Silverbacks Park.

THURSDAY, JULY 24
Atlanta Team Tennis Association, Doubles Ladder Play, Glenlake Tennis Center.

TO ADD A LISTING... e-mail matt@gaytlsports.com or call 678-519-0543.

Volleyball circuit starts season in Atlanta

Bucks rugby takes title at international championships

THE MIDDLE OF SUMMER MEANS THE START of the competitive volleyball circuit, which always comes through Atlanta.

The Hotlanta Classic XVII, the annual tournament of the gay Hotlanta Volleyball Association, is the first stop on a circuit that will wind its way through seven states and two countries before the end of November, culminating in Chicago next May with the championships of the North American Gay Volleyball Association.

But a tough economy and escalating airfares are dinging the 27-year-old Hotlanta Classic, dropping attendance to an estimated 20 teams and about 160 athletes from the 30 teams and nearly 250 participants in 2007, according to Duc Nguyen, the tournament's director.

"We are comparing our numbers with other tournament cities and they are pretty much having the same problems as us," Nguyen said. "I think we are doing OK."

Also impacting the tournament is a new NAGVA rule prohibiting players from competing in a division lower than their individual rating. The Hotlanta Classic is one of the first tournaments impacted by the rule change, which was put in place in May. Teams often had one more highly skilled player as part of its core; now they face competing at that player's skill level or dropping the player and adjusting their roster, Nguyen said.

"Teams have to find someone else to get a complete team. It's hard for those players to find a team to travel and play with. You have to start from scratch," he said.

TEAMS FROM CHICAGO, DALLAS, HOUSTON and Louisiana will join several squads from Atlanta during two days on the courts of Emory University. The rest of the tournament enjoys a decidedly Midtown sensibility. Teams are rooming at the Regency Suites Hotel on West Peachtree, Burkhart's hosts registration and other opening activities on Friday, Amsterdam Atlanta is home to the seeding announcement event on Saturday and a post tournament celebration on Sunday takes place at Woofs.

Some 20 teams are expected for the Hotlanta Classic in late July, an annual event that kicks off the national gay volleyball circuit. (Photo by Matt Hennie)

Teams open play on Saturday, working out the kinks in their performance and settling on rotations for play on Sunday. Then the matches shift to elimination play and lead to tournament champions across three divisions – A, BB and B. The A division, the top for this event, includes former college athletes and those with strong skill levels, while the B division includes players with experience but the matches are less competitive and more social.

"It's about the experience of a new city and with different people and making friends. Of course, you get some competitive volleyball, which is nice," Nguyen said.

WITH THREE LOSSES TO OPEN the Bingham Cup, the Atlanta Bucks Rugby Football Club was unsure how it would fare in the international championships last month. But when competitive play started, the club won three consecutive matches to win the Bowl Division, one of four tiers of play.

Winning the title capped a tough regular season, where the Bucks finished 3-6, but surpassed their goal of bettering their sixth-place finish in the mid-tier level of the 2006 Bingham Cup, said Bullet Manale, the club's president.

"It's a three-day tournament and we kept our heads in it," Manale said. "We didn't freak out too much. We were playing good rugby and it started to come together for us."

The tournament, held every two years, was started in 2002 to honor Mark Bingham, a gay rugby player from San Francisco who was killed in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In a touching moment, the Bucks received their trophy from Alice Hoglan, Bingham's mother.

"It was such an honor. She's so sweet and genuine. It feels good to know that we're living on Mark's legacy. It just feels good and brings some emotion to it. You did it, you won and it's an honor to get something from her," Manale said.

Matt Hennie blogs on Atlanta's gay sports scene at www.gaytlsports.com.

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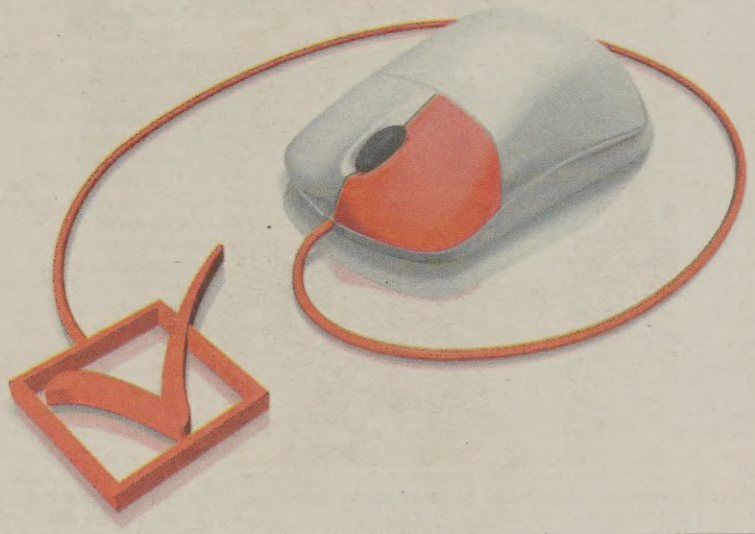

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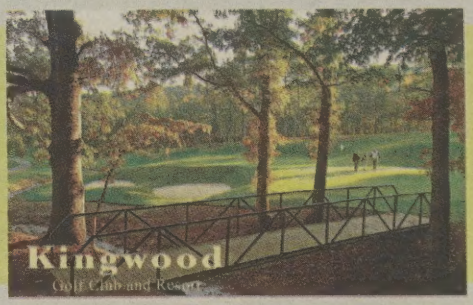

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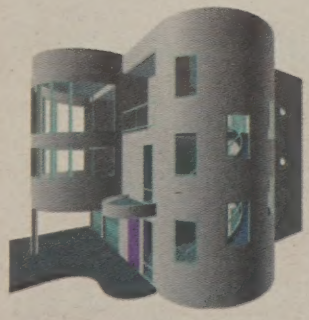
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FRIDAY JULY 18
Broadway and dance diva **Idina Menzel** takes her spectacular voice to Chastain with tracks off her new album, "I Stand." 8 p.m. at Chastain Park Amphitheatre, 4469 Stella Drive. www.ticketmaster.com

SATURDAY JULY 19
DJ Kimberly S proves she knows her beats when she comes to town with the Andrew Christian **Music to Wear Tour**. 10 p.m. at the Heretic, 2069 Cheshire Bridge Road. 404-325-3061, www.hereticatlanta.com

SUNDAY JULY 20
Sonia Leigh rocks out at the Park Tavern's **Unplugged in the Park** series. 9 p.m. at the Park Tavern, 500 10th St. NE. www.parktavern.com, www.sonialeigh.com

MONDAY JULY 21 – **SUNDAY** JULY 27
Get good eats at a better prices, as some of Atlanta's best restaurants offer three-course meals for $25 during **Downtown Atlanta Restaurant Week**. For participating restaurants, visit www.atlantadowntown.com

TUESDAY JULY 22
Enjoy one of the worst — and most deliciously campy — movies ever, **'Xanadu,'** guilt-free as part of the Plaza Theatre's monthly Summer Camp series. 9:30 p.m. at the Plaza Theatre, 1049 Ponce de Leon Ave. 404-873-1939, www.plazaatlanta.com

WEDNESDAY JULY 23
Fabulous queens compete for the title of **2008 Miss Atlanta Devine Continental** at the annual pageant. 8 p.m. at the Wild Mustang, 2115 Faulkner Road. 404-844-8800, www.wildmustangatlanta.com

Author **E. Lynn Harris** returns with a new novel, **'Just Too Good to be True.'** 8 p.m. at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse, 991 Piedmont Ave. 404-607-0082, www.outwritebooks.com

THURSDAY JULY 24
Dr. Keith Swain knows the secret to gay coupling, and he's telling it all in his book, **'Dynamic Duos,'** which he brings to Outwrite. 7:30 p.m. at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse, 991 Piedmont Ave. 404-607-0082, www.outwritebooks.com

Author and artist **Shay Youngblood** combines her two passions, stories and art, in Artist Books, which she shares at Charis. 7:30 p.m. at Charis Books & More, 1189 Euclid Ave. 404-524-0304, www.charisbooksandmore.com

PHOTO COURTESY THE KARPEL GROUP

FRIDAY JULY 18
'Shortbus' star **Jay Brannan** brings the raw sound of his new album, 'Goddammed,' to the stage. 8 p.m. at Vinyl, 1374 W Peachtree St. 404-885-1365, www.vinylatlanta.com

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FRIDAY JULY 25
Grammy winner **Lucinda Williams** rocks the great outdoors as part of the Concerts in the Garden series. 8 p.m. at the Atlanta Botanical Garden, 1345 Piedmont Ave. NE. 404-876-5859, atlantabotanicalgarden.org

THURSDAY JULY 24
For the first time, the debs take the stage at the annual **Atlanta Cotillion Cabaret & Silent Auction**. 6 p.m. at WETbar, 960 Spring St. www.atlantacotillion.com

FRIDAY JULY 25
Break out your favorite teeny bikini for **Traxx Girls' Beach Party**, which comes complete with a swimwear contest. 10 p.m. at Club Miami, 3011 Buford Highway NE. 678-6435, www.traxxgirls.com

SATURDAY JULY 26 & **SUNDAY** JULY 27
Everyone loves a good party, and even more when it's for a good cause. That's why **Joining Hearts** is such a hit every year, and this year the boys get down to LA's DJ Roland Belmares. C² Productions keeps the party going the next day with a Joining Hearts benefit tea dance, with David Knapp handling the beats. Joining Hearts: Saturday, 4 p.m. – 11 p.m. at the Atlanta Civic Center, 395 Piedmont Ave. 678-318-1446, www.joininghearts.org

SATURDAY JULY 26
Just because the beats stop at the Civic Center, doesn't mean the party has to end. Heretic has **DJ John Millier**, with a portion of the door proceeds benefiting Joining Hearts. 10 p.m. at Heretic, 2069 Cheshire Bridge Road. 404-325-3061, www.hereticatlanta.com

Girlyman bring their harmonic vocals to Dahlonega, with the Crafties opening. 8 p.m. at the Crimson Room, 24 N Park St., Dahlonega. 706-864-3982, www.thecrimsonmoon.com

THURSDAY JULY 31
Work out your "father figure" issues as **George Michael** brings his "25Live" tour to the Southeast. 8 p.m. at Philips Arena, 1 Philips Drive. www.ticketmaster.com

WEDNESDAY JULY 30
Jill Scott brings her "words and sounds" to Atlanta with an outdoor show at Chastain. 8 p.m. at Chastain Park Amphitheatre, 4469 Stella Drive. www.ticketmaster.com

PHOTO BY AP

upcoming

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					JULY 18 **Jay Brannan** at Vinyl. www.vinylatlanta.com **Idina Menzel** at Chastain Park. www.ticketmaster.com	**JULY 19** **The Mary Edith Pitts Show** at Burkhart's. www.burkharts.com **DJ Kimberly S** at the Heretic. www.hereticatlanta.com
JULY 20 **Sonia Leigh** at the Park Tavern. www.parktavern.com	**JULY 21** **Atlanta Downtown Restaurant Week** kicks off. www.atlantadowntown.com	**JULY 22** **'Xanadu'** screens as part of the Summer Camp film series at the Plaza Theatre. www.plazaatlanta.com	**JULY 23** Author **E. Lynn Harris** comes to Outwrite. www.outwritebooks.com	**JULY 24** **Cotillion Cabaret** at WETbar. www.atlantacotillion.com	**JULY 25** **Lucinda Williams** at the Atlanta Botanical Garden. atlantabotanicalgarden.org **MEGA's Family Weekend** at Tybee Island. www.megafamilyproject.org	**JULY 26** **Joining Hearts** at the Atlanta Civic Center. www.joininghearts.org **Atlanta Rollergirls** skating workshop. www.atlantarollergirls.com
JULY 27 Unity North Church presents **commitment workshop.** www.unitynorth.org **DJ David Knapp** at Opera for Joining Hearts tea dance. c2productions.com	**JULY 28** **Texas Hold 'Em** at Woofs. www.woofsatlanta.com **Young Women Writers & Writing with Intent** at Charis. charisbooksandmore.com	**JULY 29** **Trivia w/Tom** at Joe's on Juniper. www.joesatlanta.com **She & Him** at the Variety Playhouse. www.variety-playhouse.com	**JULY 30** AGLCC **Big Chicks in Charge Lunch.** atlantagaychamber.org **Jill Scott** at Chastain Park Amphitheatre. www.ticketmaster.com	**JULY 31** **George Michael** at Philips Arena. www.ticketmaster.com	**AUG. 1** **KT Tunstall** at Atlanta Botanical Garden. atlantabotanicalgarden.org **Pins for Pals.** www.palsatlanta.org	**AUG. 2** **Daring Divas** at Blake's on the Park. blakesontheparkatlanta.com **Purple Party Fundraiser** for HRC. www.atlanta.hrc.org
AUG. 3 **Cowboy Envy CD Release Party** at Eddie's Attic. www.eddiesattic.com	**AUG. 4** **Movie Night** at LeBuzz. www.thenewlebuzz.com	**AUG. 5** **Three Men & a Baby** at Blake's. myspace.com/blakesonthepark	**AUG. 6** **Karaoke** at Burkhart's. www.burkharts.com	**AUG. 7** **Urban Chic** benefiting AID Atlanta. www.aidatlanta.com	**AUG. 8** **Blake Valentine Drag Show** at Paris Decatur. www.parisdecatur.com	**AUG. 9** **Backpack in the Park.** www.forthekid.org **Atlanta Rollergirls Match.** www.atlantarollergirls.com
AUG. 10 **Seductive Sundays** at Utopia. methaneentertainment.com	**AUG. 11** **Sitcom Trivia** at Felix's on the Square. 404-249-7899	**AUG. 12** **Mary-oke w/CJ** at Mary's. www.marysatlanta.com	**AUG. 13** **Wine Club wine tasting** at Bellissima. myspace.com/bellissimalounge	**AUG. 14** Scott Turner Schofield's **'Becoming a Man in 127 Easy Steps'** at 7 Stage. www.7stage.org	**AUG. 15** **Bound Stems** at the Earl www.badearl.com	**AUG. 16** **The Legendary Traxx** at Traxx Atlanta. www.traxxatlanta.com

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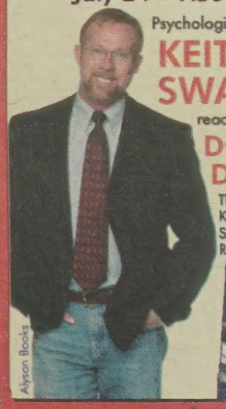

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E. Lynn Harris plays it straight

Gay author asks fans to 'grow' with him as his repertoire expands

By RYAN LEE
rlee@sovo.com

FOR MORE THAN A DECADE, E. LYNN HARRIS HAS ACHIEVED what many might have first thought impossible: landing on the New York Times' bestseller list, again and again, with books that deal honestly with the lives of black gay men.

Harris burst onto the literary scene in 1994 with "Invisible Life," the story of Raymond Tyler, a young black man fighting to make sense of his love for his girlfriend and his attraction to his friend Kelvin.

Harris originally self-published the book three years earlier while living in Atlanta, and peddled it from the back of his car before being picked up by Anchor Books, an imprint of publishing giant Doubleday.

Those lean early days launched a career that earned multiple bestsellers, strong reviews and legions of devoted fans, including many African-American gay men who were elated to finally find empathetic, entertaining portrayals of men struggling with the boundaries of sexual orientation.

Now, after nine novels and a moving 2004 memoir, "What Becomes of the Brokenhearted," Harris wants fans to follow him on a literary journey that might seem unexpected given the trajectory of his career so far — it doesn't focus on gay characters.

"Just Too Good to Be True," billed by the author as a novel about "football, family and secrets," debuted July 15.

"I'm still very, very thankful and dependent on my gay readers. I don't want them to think for one minute that I have abandoned them," Harris says, noting that his next book, due out in January 2009, is a "totally gay

Please see **HARRIS** on **Page 33**

Joining Hearts, Page 25 • Baldwin's 'Amen Corner,' Page 26 • 'Dynamic Duos,' Page 28

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DJ **Roland Belmares** puts the pulse in Joining Hearts. (Photo courtesy Roland Belmares)

We are family

Joining Hearts returns to the Civic Center for its 21st year

By ROB BECK
rbeck@sovo.com

Attendees at last year's Joining Hearts party. Organizers anticipate a return to the Civic Center this year will facilitate larger crowds. (Photo by Sher Pruitt)

JOINING HEARTS WON'T BE AT THE PIEDMONT Park pool this year as it was in 2006 and 2007, but event Chair Kerry Loftis expects the annual fundraiser's famous atmosphere of fun to prevail as it returns to the Atlanta Civic Center on July 26.

"I think it'll still be the same spirit," says Loftis, an Atlanta realtor who first came on board with the fundraiser as a volunteer bartender in 2001.

"It's like a big family reunion, and it's one of the highlights of everyone's summer," he says.

This year, the Joining Hearts board welcomes Los Angeles DJ Roland Belmares to man the turntables at the annual throwdown, which benefits AID Atlanta's housing program and Jerusalem House. Loftis says that some partiers may miss the pool, but there are certain benefits to hosting the party at the Civic Center.

"It does allow us to have more attendees," Loftis says. "Last year, we were right at our max attendance level with right around 1,700 people at the pool. The Civic Center gives us the ability to have more attendees this year than normal."

The more the merrier is certainly true when it comes to both the crowds at the party and meeting the group's fundraising goals, both of which Loftis hopes will break records this year.

"Last year, we raised $82,500, which brings us to, in our 20-year history, a total of $866,500," Loftis says. "This year, we would really like to hit the $1 million mark for our historical donations. With the state of the economy the way it is right now, we're not sure if that will happen or not, but we would at least like to be able to donate $100,000 this year."

So far, Joining Hearts is ahead of schedule on both ticket sales and contributions already in the coffers, he adds.

THAT'S MUSIC TO THE EARS OF TRACY ELLIOTT, executive director of AID Atlanta. The organization's housing program has been a recipient of Joining Hearts proceeds since the event's inception, and Elliott's grateful for the important role it plays in AID Atlanta's work.

"It's very focused on one specific need among the many needs created by HIV and AIDS: preventing homelessness among AIDS-affected people and families," Elliott says. "This is a huge unmet need."

And Loftis and the rest of the board are dedicated to continuing meeting that need.

"One hundred percent of our ticket sales and our donations from the bar goes strictly to our beneficiaries," he says.

For his part, DJ Belmares is grateful for the role he's able to play in providing housing assistance to Atlantans in need.

"It's always nice to play for a charity," he says. "Number one, I think it's only right to give something back in some small way to a community that has supported me all this time. And number two, when you know that the organization you are doing it for in turn does so much good for the local community, how can you not want to be a part of it?"

THIS YEAR'S PLAN IS TO TAKE JOINING HEARTS above and beyond its past incarnations by creating more awareness of the event through promotional pre-events, which have taken place in recent weeks at venues including WETbar, Blake's and the Heretic. Loftis says this is the result of some new blood within the planning committee.

"Probably 60 percent of our board is all new members, and we had all come to the consensus that we really need to push the event in order to take it to the next level," he says. "Last year was our biggest as far as donations, we had $10,000 just as tips from the bar, and we had a record number of attendance.

"After last year, we just saw that this thing is really starting to grow and get bigger and bigger, and we need to restructure things and try to continue that growth."

In addition to the promotional events and the main party itself, there are a few peripheral events centered on Joining Hearts weekend, including WETbar's official after party with DJ Bryan Pfeiffer. In addition, the Heretic will donate a portion of the door proceeds from its July 26 evening with John Miller to Joining Hearts, and C2 Production's Chris Coleman presents a Joining Hearts-benefiting tea dance on July 27 at Opera.

The C2 party is also the Atlanta stop of the 2008 Global Groove Tour, and features local DJ David Knapp at the tables.

"It just kind of came together, and everybody's really excited about doing both events under one roof," Coleman says.

PART OF JOINING HEART'S APPEAL IS THAT attendees can get down with out-of-towners without having to leave Atlanta. Loftis hopes to play up that aspect even more this year with a national advertising campaign. He says Atlanta Pride's relocation this year and the recent closing of a number of the city's gay nightlife venues seems to have decreased party traffic coming into the city.

"One reason we did that is to try to bring some out-of-town dollars back to Atlanta," he says. "We just tried to promote nationally, to give a lot of the people that used to come to Atlanta to hang out during the summer a reason to come back and enjoy our community."

There are so many factors that contribute to Joining Hearts' ongoing success, but Loftis says the key to its long life is the fact that at its heart, Joining Hearts is an organization people just want to be part of.

"It's a very fun volunteer organization," he says. "I think that's what helped sustain us all these years, that once people get involved with it, they enjoy it and continue coming back every year."

Joining Hearts 21
July 26, 4 p.m. - 11 p.m.
Atlanta Civic Center, 395 Piedmont Ave.
678-318-1446, www.joininghearts.org

Official Joining Hearts After Party
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WETbar, 960 Spring St.
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Joining Hearts-Benefiting Party
July 26, 10 p.m.
Heretic, 2069 Cheshire Bridge Road
404-325-3061, www.hereticatlanta.com

C2 Production's Joining Hearts-Benefiting Tea Dance
July 27, 6 p.m.
Opera, 1150-B Peachtree St.
www.c2productions.biz

A big 'Amen'

Large cast pays tribute to James Baldwin as part of National Black Arts Festival

SO VO SOUTHERN VOICE **THEATER**

JIM FARMER

ANDREA FRYE SAW KENNY LEON'S VERSION OF of James Baldwin's "The Amen Corner" at the Alliance Theatre many years ago and remembers how vividly she liked it. She laughs that it's now ironic she is directing the play herself at Leon's own company, True Colors.

"The Amen Corner" is one of the most noted works from Baldwin, long regarded as a pioneer in the gay movement because he was openly gay in the ultra-conservative 1950s.

First published in 1954, the play takes place in a Harlem church, where Sister Margaret Alexander is trying to hold onto her congregation. Some of her church members have started to rebel, and her estranged husband has returned. Another dilemma is her son David, who secretly desires to go against his mother's wishes and become a musician.

Frye has long been a fan of both the play and of Baldwin's work.

"I've always wanted to direct this," she says. "It holds up so well, because things are still the same. They haven't changed much."

She calls Baldwin a "champion of the human being."

"He was a firebrand when it came to human and civil rights," Frye says. "He was very articulate and a dynamic personality. As a minister, he was a powerful speaker.

"James came under a lot of pressure from his family, from everywhere, but he did what he wanted and was who he was," she continues. "What I love about this show is James' wonderful text, his dialogue. It's such honest writing."

The director showed her cast — mostly veterans, but some younger performers — a PBS special on Baldwin during rehearsals.

"We all fell in love with him, some of us again," Frye says.

THE SON CHARACTER IS SOMETHING OF A metaphor for Baldwin himself, Frye says.

"You'll see Baldwin throughout, but not overtly," she says. "There is so much here about following your heart, being yourself, not doing things the prescribed way. That is particularly true in the character of David and his desire to be a musician."

The unsupported quest to become a musician by David **(Ronve O'Daniel)**, shown here with his father, Luke **(Thomas Jefferson Byrd)**, may be a reflection of gay playwright James Baldwin. (Photo by Tom Meyer, courtesy True Colors)

"The Amen Corner" was one of the first pieces of work that put Baldwin on the map, but it's rarely produced these days. Even Frye admits it's a challenge because of the large cast, the music and the three-act story.

Nonetheless, the ensemble is one of the deepest in recent theater memory. Denise Burse of Tyler Perry's "House of Payne" stars as Sister Margaret. The supporting cast includes Bernardine Mitchell, Chandra Currelley, Margo Moorer, Tony nominee Thomas Byrd and many more.

"This cast is an embarrassment of riches, Frye says.

"THE AMEN CORNER" IS PRESENTED AS PART of Atlanta's annual National Black Arts Festival, and Frye is particularly excited to be working for True Colors.

"I love that fact that True Colors pays tribute to African-American work and artists and prevents them from being pushed aside," she says.

Frye says she pays homage to Leon's production at the beginning of her version, but she also admits she has never been one to copycat.

"I tend to be a maverick director, and want to do it my way," she says.

Not only has Frye made a name for herself as a director, but she was also the first African-American actress allowed by playwright Edward Albee to play the lead role in "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?"

'The Amen Corner'
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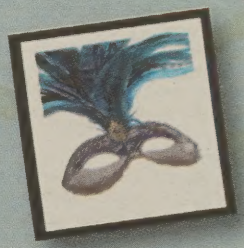

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Holy relationships, Alpha Man!

New book outlines dynamics of successful gay male relationships

SOUTHERN VOICE **BOOKS**

ROB BECK

WHEN IT COMES TO RELATIONSHIP ADVICE FOR gay men, comic books have a lot more to offer than most may expect. At least, they do according to evolutionary psychologist Dr. Keith Swain, who taps into comic book iconography with his new book, "Dynamic Duos: The Alpha Beta Key to Unlocking Success in Gay Relationships."

Swain brings the book and a seminar on coupling to Atlanta in a series of appearances July 24-26.

"The best way to look at it is, some of us are Batman, and some of us are Robin," Swain says. "It's one of the few iconic images that fit, and so that's why we pulled on that."

In the book's terms, some gay men are Alpha Men, and some are Beta Men. And the difference isn't as simple as splitting the two into traditional masculine and feminine stereotypes.

"A lot of people think it means femininity, and that's really difficult, because I think in our society, and especially in the gay community, we have a real hesitancy to be identified as feminine," Swain says.

It's better to look at the alpha/beta dynamic in terms of what each person brings to the relationship. Alphas tend to be providers who deal with the external world, and betas tend to be nurturers who take care of the emotional core of the relationship, according to "Dynamic Duos."

THROUGH RESEARCH SWAIN DID FOR HIS BOOK, he realized that the majority of successful gay relationships — the 13 percent he says last more than 20 years —strike a complementary balance between the alpha and beta dynamic. The book includes a test that allows readers to place themselves along the spectrum from one (beta) to 100 (alpha).

"If you see somebody scoring in the 90s, they will tend to be attracted to someone who will score in the 10 range, and they really tend to fall into stereotypical roles, where 'I'm the man of the house and he cooks and cleans,'" Swain says. "I can't judge that; if that's what they're comfortable with, that's great. But I tend to think most of us fall into the bell curve. There's a lot of us in the middle."

The terms "alpha" and "beta" seem to imply hierarchy, but Swain says that's not necessarily the case.

"What people fail to realize is that the betas have as much power, if not more sometimes, than the alpha male, because having the ability to be flexible and adapt is truly a beta trait and it's very powerful," he says. "A good way to look at is like yin and yang, counterbalancing powers."

Swain will teach gay men how to look for the yin to their yang — or vice-versa — and to counterbalance their powers once they find them, at a series of appearances in Atlanta, including at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse, a stop at the Atlanta Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce's July Fourth Friday Networking event, and a pair of workshops to be announced.

Dr. Keith Swain
July 24, 7:30 p.m.
Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse
991 Piedmont Ave.
404-607-0082
www.outwritebooks.com

Fourth Friday Networking
July 25, 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Ikea, 441 16th St. NW.
www.atlantagaychamber.org

Superhero Seeking Sidekick Single Men's Workshop
July 26, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Dynamic Duos Couples' Workshop
July 26, 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.
Location TBA
www.dynamicduos.info

Dr. **Keith Swain** introduces a relationship superhero, Alpha Man. (Photo courtesy Alyson Books)

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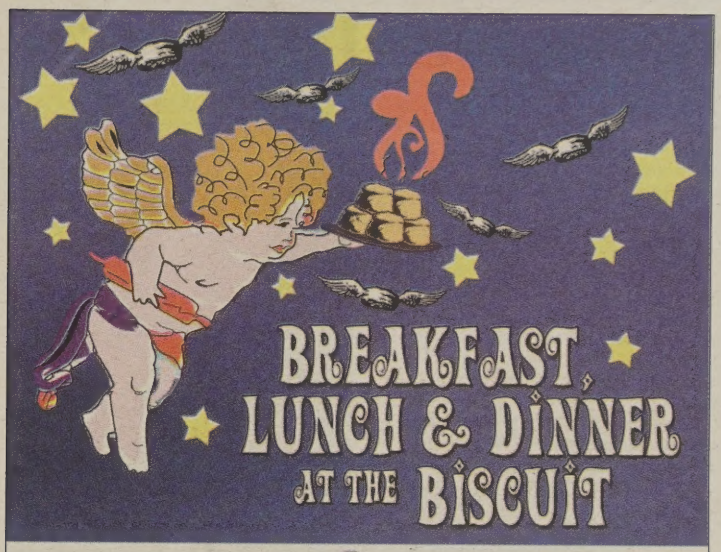

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In love again

The way to your heart is through Downtown Restaurant Week

SO VO SOUTHERN VOICE **DINING**
MIKE FLEMING

SOME SAY THERE IS NO LOVE LIKE NEW LOVE. But there's a secret those sages don't always tell you: rediscovering a passion and rekindling an old flame can be even better.

No one knows both secrets better than the partners in the annual Downtown Atlanta Restaurant Week. This year's event takes place July 21-27 and offers not only more than a dozen favorites that define the glamour of downtown dining, but also a few newly opened hotspots that are garnering tons of buzz.

Central Atlanta Progress, the Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau, Brand Atlanta and owners of the Downtown skyline's trademark building Bank of America come together to help you fall in love with your city all over again — straight to your heart through your stomach.

DOWNTOWN HAS ALWAYS BEEN A CULINARY hotbed, but to ramp up the wow factor this year, Restaurant Week coincides with the National Black Arts Festival. The two city-signature events are working in unison to encourage their patrons to take advantage of both.

Now you can experience a special three-course dinner for $25 a person, see a show or exhibit, and even enjoy a specially priced night in one of downtown's fine hotels that house the participating restaurants. It's like taking a vacation in your own city.

The ticket every foodie is clamoring for this week also gets a boost, like so many things in life, with a cocktail. The Sapphire Collins, the signature drink of the event, is available at many of the participating restaurants. We provide the not-so-secret recipe on this page. Other eateries will also suggest wine pairings for each course. Restaurant Week meals do not include beverages, tax or gratuity.

JUST TO WHET YOUR APPETITE, MANY restaurants rated highly in this column through the years are on board for the event. Some are creating special menus just for the occasion, while others highlight signature dishes from their regular menus.

Downtown Atlanta Restaurant Week allows some of your favorite pricey restaurants to offer their luxurious dining experience at a price lower than you would normally expect to pay. Choose any of the participating restaurants, and for $25 a head, enjoy an appetizer, entree and dessert at such landmarks as City Grill, Hsu's Gourmet, Maxim Prime, Pittypat's Porch, Luckie Food Lounge, Max Lager's, Dailey's, Pacific Rim, Prime Meridian and Tringali's.

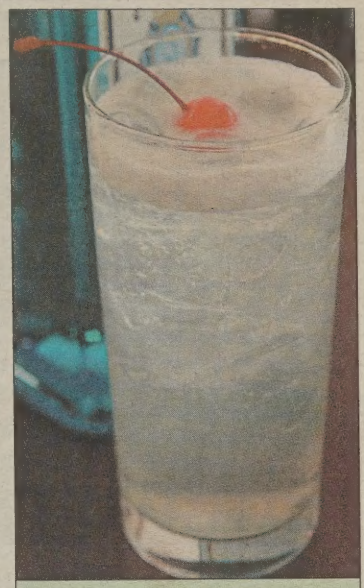
Hungry yet? Other delectable meals in posh surroundings are available at gay favorites No Mas! Cantina, Peasant Bistro, Sear, Spoon Tahi, Stats, Thrive, and Grille at 590.

For a complete list of participating restaurants in Downtown Atlanta Restaurant Week, a peak at their menus, or the performances and showings during the National Black Arts Festival, visit the events' websites.

Maybe you'll find that love really is lovelier the second time around.

Downtown Atlanta Restaurant Week
July 21-27
various locations
www.atlantadowntown.com/HavingFun_Restaurant Week.asp

National Black Arts Festival
July 18-27
www.nbaf.org



The Sapphire Collins is the signature drink of Downtown Atlanta Restaurant Week. (Courtesy 360 Media)

Sapphire Collins
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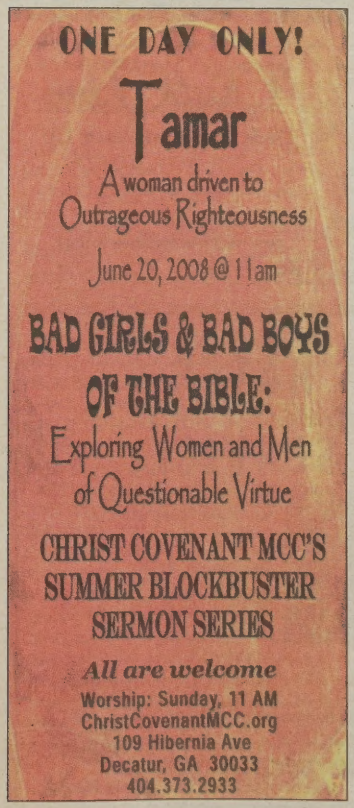
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Harris starts dialogue with new generation and a broader audience

HARRIS, continued from Page 23

story" called "Basketball Jones."

"I will continue to tell those stories, but I want [my readers] to grow with me and allow me to tell stories that I find interesting and that I am passionate about," he says.

Southern Voice caught up with Harris, who now splits his time between Atlanta and Fayetteville, Ark., as he prepared for a July 23 reading at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse.

Southern Voice: What was your inspiration for "Just Too Good to Be True"?

Harris: It is really basically a mother and son story. It's a book that comes out of my teaching experience at the University of Arkansas. I wanted to expand my base and range as a writer. It's my first book that doesn't deal specifically with sexuality, even though there are a few little nuggets in there for true E. Lynn fans.

What are some of the issues that you explore in the book?

I explore the relationship of this very popular college athlete and the extents that agents will go to get them to sign, the problems that these athletes run into in terms of money while they are in college, and the things they are willing to do to be able to pay for some of the things they need. It is set in a college campus, and also set in Atlanta, where the main character's mother owns beauty shops. It also explores what happens when you keep secrets.

Is the writing process easier for you with so many books under your belt?

This one was particularly difficult. It took almost four years. I had more rewrites than any of the others, mainly because at first I tired to tell the story from a third-person point of view, but my editor insisted that I try to tell it from [the main character] Brady's point of view.

I thought it was going to be really hard from the perspective of a 21-year-old heterosexual character. Eventually I was able to do it, but it took longer.

Was that the most challenging part, getting into that mindset and also expanding your audience to these topics?

Yes. The two main narrators of the book are a 21-year-old straight character and his mother, who is an African-American woman in her late thirties. So everyday when I went to write, I had to put myself in that mindset. I think that helps me to expand as a writer and as a person.

I basically got the idea because when I was teaching at the University of Arkansas, I had a lot of student athletes who took my class. It was interesting for me to watch them as they came in the classroom with all the bravado and all the machismo that went along with that, then when you would see them with their mother on a football weekend, they seemed like different people. So I thought about that dynamic.

Looking back to your previous work, "Invisible Life" — the title and the story — perfectly captures that era. If you were to write a similar coming-of-age book about black gay men today, what do you think it would be called?

I think it would be interesting. ... I think now the concerns are different than when I wrote "Invisible Life." I think kids are a lot more open, seemingly a lot more sure of themselves. I still think there is a whole other generation of "down low" brothers, if you will, on college campuses and in cities like Atlanta that are very much like Raymond was. ...

I still think it is more of a concern in the African-American community than it is in other communities as a whole. I think some of the considerations of parents and dating females is still very, very relevant, but I don't think as much.

What's it been like to take our stories and carry them over into audiences that might not have read them otherwise?

Sometimes I don't think about what I have accomplished, but I am very, very proud of that, of getting the dialogue started, of being open and honest about who I am and representing this community.

Since the novel is set in Atlanta, what are your thoughts on what the city means to your personal identity and black gay identity?

Atlanta is home for me, and I love being a part of this community. I think one of the reasons I love Atlanta so much is its diversity on so many levels, not only in terms of sexuality but in terms of race.

I think this is a good place to be if you are African-American and if you are gay, and I think it is great to be able to say that for a southern city. It is very cosmopolitan and it lends itself very well as a backdrop for telling stories.

Laura Douglas-Brown contributed.

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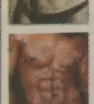

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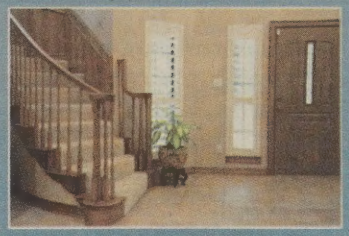

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Madonna's brother says she spooks children

dish
There's a Fine Line Between Telling the Truth and Talking Trash

Dish love the appropriation of Biblical legends. As such, we are practically falling out of our tube tops at the chance to reference Cain and Abel vis-a-vis **MADONNA**'s latest appearance in the headlines.

It appears that Madge is most definitely not her brother's keeper, as trashy bro **CHRISTOPHER CICCONE** just penned a tell-all book called "Life With My Sister Madonna."

Early reports put the book in line for a prestigious "Captain Obvious" award, as it seems mostly comprised of tidbits about Madonna being a total whack-job. Page Six reports that some of the less-than-juicy factoids include that Madge may have slapped fish with **INGRID CASARES** and that her husband **GUY RITCHIE** is a raging homophobe.

Dish did, however, find one piece of information that would've been worth writing home about. It seems that Madonna's interior decorating scheme includes an 8x12-foot photo of herself in S&M gear lying on a bed full of dead animals. Plus, it's in a place where the kids can see it.

Dish has done the research and found that one Beverly Hills shrink offers an "all-you-can-analyze" lifetime therapy plan. For one low introductory rate, Lourdes, Rocco and David can take all the time they need to recover from the looming omnipresence of Madge's leathery vadge.

Madonna's brother makes sickening accusations in tell-all book. (Photo by AP)

The incredible, edible Elton

Garbage. Live eels. **SIR ELTON JOHN.** What do these things have in common? Dish does not want to eat them.

But there's another commonality: overly liberal ice creamers Ben and Jerry have created another affront to common decency by craft-ing a limited edition ice cream flavor in honor of Elton.

Elton John (Photo by AP)

"Goodbye Yellow Brickle Road" contains chocolate ice cream, peanut butter cookie dough, butter brickle and white chocolate chunks. In short, it contains what is probably the plump pop star's breakfast, lunch, dinner and midnight snack. Dish doesn't want to be overly judgmental, but we think Elton might not have thought out the implications of a notoriously overweight celebrity shilling heavy cream.

"Brickle Road" was created to celebrate the star's July 21 concert in the creamery's home state Vermont, the only American state he had yet to play. It will be sold from July 18-25 in Vermont Ben & Jerry's locations, with proceeds going to benefit the Elton John AIDS Foundation.

Dish is no conspiracy theorist, but something about this is suspect. The confluence of Vermont, Elton John and white chocolate makes us think that the heavy hand of the gay mafia is at play.

Maybe California was stealing Vermont's early coupling thunder, so drastic measures were being taken to get it back? Stay tuned, dear readers, as Dish creates our own carton of "A Caramel in the Wind" and does some detective work.

Trying to set the record straight

Hey, know who's not gay? **AL REYNOLDS.** Know why he's not gay? Because he says so!

The former Mr. **STAR JONES** has long been plagued by allegations of buggery, but he is refuting them in the most respectable, legitimate way possible: Posting some homemade videos on YouTube. That bastion of online credibility is now home to several clips of Reynolds speaking with an interviewer about all the irrefutable evidence pointing to his love of boobies.

"I teach kids at a university," Reynolds says. "I have a doctorate degree that I'm working on ... This trumps the gossip because it's the truth."

Dish is sold!. No gay man alive would be caught doing something as tacky as pursuing higher education or expanding young minds. Sorry Al, we'll never call your ex-wife a beard again. Even if she's actually growing one.

Send comments, suggestions to **Dish@sovo.com**

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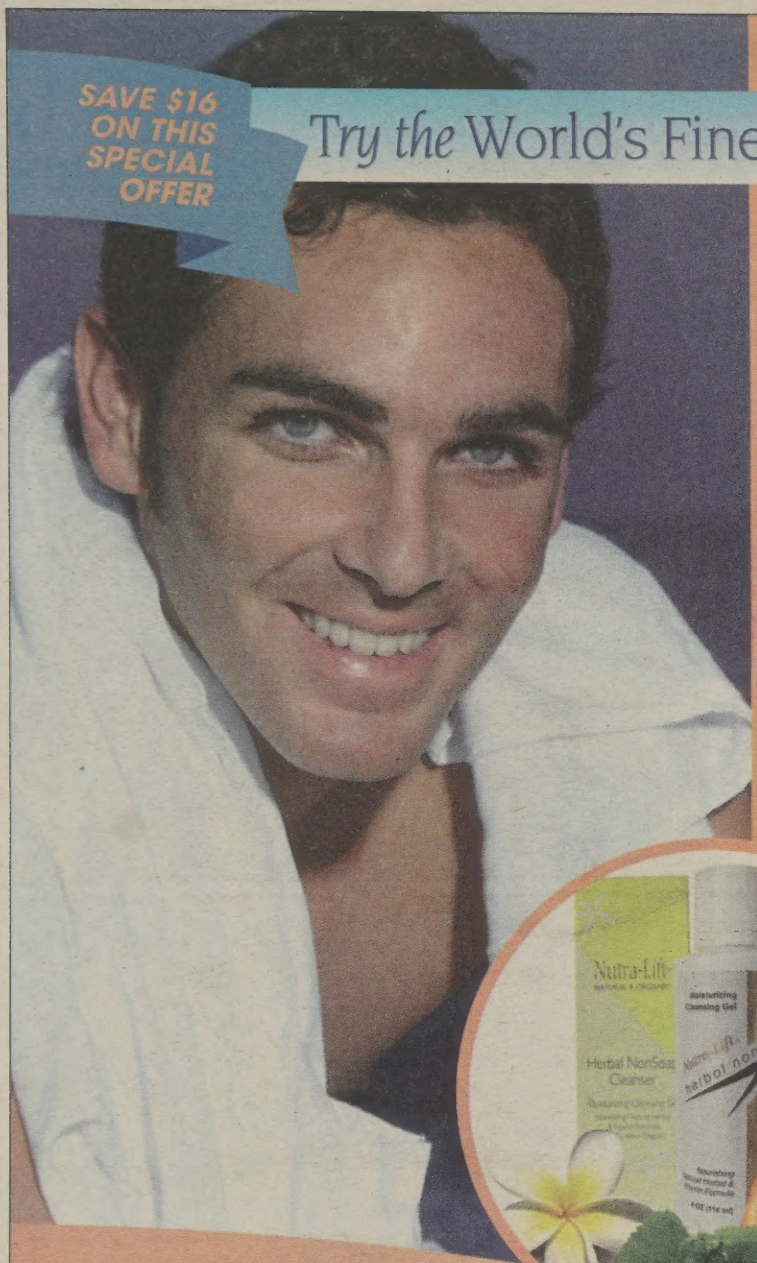

Nutra-Lift® Herbal Non Soap

Imagine a Natural & Organic cleanser, a nourishing mask, a moisturizer, a toner & make-up remover All-in-One. With its many natural extracts, anti-oxidants, vitamins and minerals, it is a healing treatment in itself and helps restore the skin. Plus the maximum moisture of Hyaluronic Acid & Lipidure ... and the many benefits of vitamin C ester. Works well for all skin types. The Nutra-Lift® Herbal Non Soap leaves no film on the skin, which is very important so additional skin treatments can be absorbed. Now silky fresh healthy skin is just moments away!

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